Wide Angle
a journal of literature and film

Mission Statement

Literature and film continually reimagine an ever-changing world, and through our research we discover our relationships to those art forms and the cultures they manifest. Publishing one issue each semester, *Wide Angle* serves as a conduit for the expression and critique of that imagination. A joint publication between English majors and faculty, the journal embodies the interdisciplinary nature of the Department of English at Samford University. It provides a venue for undergraduate research, an opportunity for English majors to gain experience in the business of editing and publishing, and a forum for all students, faculty, and staff to publish their best work. As a wide-angle lens captures a broad field of vision, this journal expands its focus to include critical and creative works, namely academic essays, book and film reviews, and commentaries, as well as original poetry, short fiction and non-fiction, and screenplays.

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Lindsey Brodt

The Perpetuation of Trauma Through Silence:

An Examination of the Role of Storytelling in *The Kite Runner*

Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* depicts adolescent life in Afghanistan, told through the adult narrator Amir. Reflecting on the events of his childhood within Afghanistan, Amir provides an in-depth look at the role of narrative in both personal and cultural history. Afghanistan in recent years has been the subject of interest for many Westerners. Examinations of differing religious and cultural expectations lessen the gap between Western and Eastern worldviews. *The Kite Runner*, on some level, addresses these same questions. More than just an attempt to understand Middle Eastern life, Hosseini inserts his personal experience as a child in Afghanistan to provide understanding of culture and customs to Western audiences. Hosseini's choice to utilize compounding stories as a narrative tool and to create allegorical characters increases understanding of Afghanistan for the reader. In addition, his choice to integrate trauma into the narrative creates a relevant and haunting novel. According to van der Kolk in "The Black Hole of Trauma," "A random survey of 1,245 American adolescents showed that 23% had been the victims of physical or sexual assaults, as well as witnesses of violence against others. One out of every five of the exposed adolescents developed PTSD" (489). Amir's encounter with trauma, though placed in a foreign culture, easily resonates with American readers. Through the lens of Amir as an adult narrator, the reader gains insight into the traditions and customs of Afghanistan's people, which is paired with Amir's experience

as a child. When Amir witnesses Hassan's rape, he responds with a silence that perpetuates his trauma, prevents healing, and halts the continuation of both his personal narrative and of Afghanistan as a whole. *The Kite Runner* demonstrates the importance of storytelling in the healing of both individuals and the nation as a whole.

    The Kite Runner propels the reader into remembered Afghanistan, through the adult narrator Amir. He depicts his childhood in affluent Kabul, focusing on stories involving himself and his servant-friend Hassan. Their relationship frequently shifts between subservient and companion roles, with Amir as the director. To establish the gravity of later events, Amir dedicates many stories to the intricacies of that relationship and to the cultural expectations and normalizations of greater Afghanistan. Through this connection, the fate of the characters and of Afghanistan as a whole becomes inextricably tied together. Amir's narration provides healing to himself, through his disclosure of the particular circumstances of Hassan's rape. This horrific event provides the thrust of the novel. After establishing an idyllic childhood and inserting unease into the narrative, the unthinkable occurs: the sexual violation of Hassan at the hand of another child. This event halts the narration. Amir's witness of the rape affects him well into adulthood, because he perpetuates his trauma with two distinct coping mechanisms. First, he chooses silence. Amir does not speak about what he saw for twenty-five years. Secondly, Amir chooses an incomplete story. Amir cannot articulate the full details of what he saw, and since he is silent, he cannot tell a new story. Each new story the narrator attempts to share only results in interruptions from memories involving Hassan. His inability to vocalize any memories of Hassan demonstrates these two effects. Both of these perpetuate the affects of trauma in his life. Amir's trauma is perpetuated because of his silence, and only through the completion of his halted story can he find healing.

Hassan's rape both provides both the horrific plot propulsion and a direct connection to larger Afghanistan, through Amir's silent witness. Bessel Van Der Kolk speaks of the effects of trauma:

> As human beings we belong to an extremely resilient species. Since time immemorial we have rebounded from our relentless wars, countless disasters (both natural and man-made), and the violence and betrayal in our own lives. But traumatic experiences do leave traces, whether on a large scale (on our histories and cultures) or close to home, on our families, with dark secrets being imperceptibly passed down through generations. (1)

Amir's "trace" of trauma runs throughout the entire novel and spans almost a quarter of a century. He neglects both his friendship and country of origin, but cannot eradicate those memories. Amir witnesses the unspeakable: the rape of his half-brother at the hand of another child. The horror of this act is two-fold: a child robbed of innocence by a young, though sociopathic boy. The rape of a child by another child causes an intense reaction of repulsion and horror. This emotional scene, paired with Amir's passivity, gains horror with each inclusion of additional details from the adult narrator. Afghanistan, as well, experienced a "rape" when its purity of culture was infiltrated by Soviets and later corrupted by the Taliban.

Hassan, and by extension Afghanistan as a whole, receives untold and unsolicited horror. Van Der Kolk also says, "Trauma, by definition, is unbearable and intolerable. Most rape victims, combat soldiers, and children who have been molested became so upset when they think about what they experienced that they try to push it out of their minds, trying to act as if nothing happened, and move on" (1-2). Trauma, at its core, epitomizes the unsayable. When humans do not have words for the horror witnessed, they define it as trauma. This word, and all it signifies,

when placed in the context of children, provides more meaning and needs more delicacy. Children, without the experience and maturity of age, do not possess the tools to understand and properly heal from such enormous pain. Trauma, then, in the cases of children, is often larger and harder to manage. From the onset of the novel, Amir grapples with shame, stemming from unresolved trauma. He says, "I became what I am at the age of twelve, on a frigid overcast day in the winter of 1975" (Hosseini 1). This detail provides a concrete moment of propulsion to the larger story of the novel. Amir's personal narrative gains significant weight in that moment. His story does not find resolution and must repeat as if on a loop. Amir quickly states: "That was a long time ago, but it's wrong what they say about the past, I've learned, about how you can bury it. Because the past claws its way out" (1). The tension between memory and fear immediately presents itself, through the presence of an older narrator Amir, who returns to the past to delve into the circumstances of that memory. The narrator, though, has found resolution and now articulates his story. With notes of fear, regret, and clearly established in the opening paragraph, haunted Amir narrates stories from his childhood. Specifically, he shares stories depicting Afghan culture and his relationship between himself and two others: his father and his servant-friend Hassan. Through sharing stories, he finds healing.

Amir's initial evaluation of Hassan and his relationship appears sweet, but quickly darkens. Amir speaks of his childhood memories: "Sometimes my entire childhood seems like one long lazy summer day with Hassan, chasing each other between tangles of trees in my father's yard . . ." (Hosseini 25). Their idyllic childhood, paired with the larger context of a culturally pure Afghanistan begins the narrative. Details about Afghani culture and Hassan's character are revealed sporadically, bonding the two ideas. Amir slowly and deliberately connects Hassan with Afghanistan as a whole. By moving more deliberately through the

narrative of his childhood, the reader naturally pairs Hassan and Afghanistan while entering into the culture of Afghanistan. Slowly, however, Amir destroys this idea through both the passage of time and compounding of stories. Hassan's religious differences and subservient role, Amir's insecurities with his father, Baba, and the eventual invasion of Communists all combine in a chord of tension. Any stories Amir mentions in between only propel the plot toward a dark encounter. The stories serve to parallel Afghanistan and Hassan, establish a framework of life in Afghanistan, and foreshadow impending evil, both in the bodily form of Assef and in the ideology and destructive power of the Soviet Union. Amir discloses the events of the kite-fighting tournament, a beloved Afghani tradition. The excitement of victory encourages Hassan's participation in a renowned Afghan custom: running the kite. Hassan chases the cut kite in order to present it to Amir. Amir, after a few moments of basking in his success, seeks out Hassan and finds him in an alley, with Assef.

After taunting Hassan, Assef approaches. Amir describes the scene he witnesses: "Assef unbuttoned his winter coat, took it off, folded it slowly and deliberately. He placed it against the wall. I opened my mouth, almost said something. Almost. The rest of my life might have turned out differently if I had. But I didn't. I just watched. Paralyzed" (Hosseini 73). This paralyzed state continues throughout the duration of the novel. Amir cannot heal because he cannot finish the story. Amir does not act, and so he must live in the tragic silence of a halted story. In this moment, Amir experiences the sharp intensity of shame. He does not act, and so his paralyzed state becomes normalized. His shame permeates his life. Lewis says, "Shame is one of the quintessential human emotions. It affects all our feelings about ourselves, and all our dealings with others" (1). The rest of Amir's experience in the novel occurs with strong feelings of guilt and shame. Right as Assef physically confronts Hassan, Amir shuts his eyes and reflects on

several memories and a dream (Hosseini 73-74). Besides building suspense for the reader, this cut highlights Amir's unwillingness to confront his own shame. Even as Amir the narrator discloses all of the details to the reader, he hesitates to speak his shame and end the cycle of silence. The narrator's first attempt to relay the circumstances of Hassan's rape results in this sly avoidance method. His second try conveys a graphic depiction of Hassan's rape. Amir says, "Assef knelt behind Hassan, put his hands on Hassan's hips and lifted his bare buttocks. He kept one hand on Hassan's back and undid his own belt buckle with his free hand. He unzipped his jeans. Dropped his underwear. He positioned himself behind Hassan. Hassan didn't struggle. Didn't even whimper" (75). By describing all the details, the narrator Amir transfers the guilt to a third party. No longer is he a silent witness. Speaking in general terms would not have absolved him; only full disclosure provides healing.

Immediately after the description, Amir again changes the subject, briefly describing the ritual aspects of Eid-e-Qorban. He does so to parallel Hassan and a sacrificial lamb, but with this metaphor, the brutality of the scene is lessened and distanced. Additionally, Hassan becomes connected to the holiest parts of Afghani culture and religious practices. As Assef leaves the scene, Amir is faced with the opportunity to confront Assef. His cowardice can be exposed or courage demonstrated. With his choice to remain silent, shame appears and permeates his life. As Assef runs away from Hassan and past Amir, he reflects on his options. Amir ponders, "I had one last chance to make a decision. One final opportunity to decide who I was going to be. I could step into that alley, stand up for Hassan—the way he'd stood up for me all those times in the past—and accept whatever would happen to me. Or I could run. In the end, I ran" (Hosseini 77). Silence frames the situation, through Amir's present but unspeaking witness. The motif of silence is immediately presented, and then perpetuated with Amir's encounter with Hassan

immediately after his rape. D.C. Chambial and Sulakshna Sharma explore this idea when they explain: "Many childhood incidents are etched in the minds of these brothers. Amir's mind is unable to forget that he has wronged Hassan. He experiences the pangs of guilt even after twenty-five years of his separation from his brother. The dark shadow of past experiences never leaves him as he remembers the fateful day of the kite-flying competition . . ." (171). The shame within the context of a beloved Afghani tradition is significant. Hassan cannot be separated from his home country. Instead, through careful pairing of events and situations that mirror each other, Hassan represents a pure Afghanistan, recently defiled.

This moment provides a drastic shift in the storytelling method. The writings in "Bonds of Love in the Novels of Khaled Hosseini" illustrate the gravity of Amir's inactivity: "The consciousness of his guilt of not saving Hassan from being sodomized by Assef's gang haunts Amir for the entire lifetime and he is not able to pardon himself" (Nanda and Shokeen 11). Amir cannot share stories in the same way after this horrific event. By ignoring the situation, the stories stop and merely focus on details from that winter involving Hassan and Amir's coping with trauma. The act itself, though horrible, worsens through Amir's betrayal through inaction. Amir ignores Hassan's pain, choosing to feign innocence. As a coping mechanism, Amir's anger explodes onto Hassan. Amir struggles with his own shame and cowardice, which creates an increasingly painful reaction to Hassan. Amir, rather than sharing, searches for ways to release the shame of his silent witness. Instead, his unspoken story haunts him. He cannot function normally because his trauma repeats constantly. Van Der Kolk characterizes post-traumatic stress disorder: "This description suggests a clear story line: A person is suddenly and unexpectedly devastated by an atrocious event and is never the same again. The trauma may be over, but it keeps being replayed in continually recycled memories and in a reorganized nervous

system" (157). The devastation described above accurately reflects Amir's experience following his witness of Hassan's rape. Though Amir does not directly receive Assef's violence, he displays signs of trauma, as does Hassan. Hassan loses weight (Hosseini 86). Amir cannot sleep (86), becomes ill (84), has great anxiety (89), and avoids of the subject of his shame: Hassan (88). Sorsoli argues: "The language of the unsayable are made up of four key features often present in spoken language: negations, erasures and revisions, smokescreens and evasions, and silences" (132). Amir and Hassan both experience trauma, but Amir's narration allows access into his inner thoughts. Through the physical displays of unseen signs of trauma, the reader understands what remains unsaid in a way that is unavailable with the other characters. His lack of vocalization about the event does not mean forgetting, but rather exclusion. He does not share what he saw because he cannot say what he saw and cannot forget.

When Amir's father first recounts of the kite fighting and subsequent victory, Amir becomes physically ill. Instead of the satisfaction of approval, Amir says, "Baba began to pull over, but I didn't make it. . . . Little shapes formed behind my eyelids, like hands playing shadows on the wall. They twisted, merged, formed a single image: Hassan's brown corduroy pants discarded on a pile of old bricks in the alley" (Hosseini 84). The scene depicted above is the first tremor of unresolved trauma. Baba brags about Amir's kite fighting victory to relatives, Amir becomes violently ill. Rather than articulate his shame, Amir displays physical signs of trauma. This response differs from Amir's anticipated reaction. For years, he imagined the feeling of Baba's respect and admiration. Now that he won the kite-fighting tournament, making Baba proud, he can only remember his shame and become ill. The conclusion he anticipated in regards to his severed relationship with his father cannot satisfy because another story has eclipsed his life: Hassan's rape.

The stories immediately following the rape differ in situation but not in detail. Silence reigns. Since the story is not told, it cannot be properly concluded to allow for the next one to begin. Much of the narration of the rest of the novel is Amir's attempt to finish the story. Amir, at this point, has not admitted to anyone what has happened. His conscience is deeply shamed, resulting in a physically violent reaction. Levine asserts: "The healing of trauma depends on the recognition of its symptoms" (24). With repression and silence, healing is not possible and memory must continue to haunt Amir. His repression forces the perpetuation of his responses. Levine also speaks of his professional experiences: "My observations of scores of traumatized people has led me to conclude that post-traumatic symptoms are, fundamentally, incomplete psychological responses suspended in fear. Post-traumatic stress is one example. These symptoms will not go away until the responses are discharged and completed" (34). By refusing to vocalize the story, Amir cannot complete it. Though he tries to silence what he witnessed, every story after this event becomes manipulated in Amir's head to mirror Hassan. Amir sees Hassan in every situation, but cannot vocalize shameful recollection. Amir's first attempts result in violent reactions, as evidenced by his own vomiting in front of Baba.

This association between his emotional state and violence continues throughout the rest of that winter. The only other distinct memory from that time focused on Hassan and Amir climbing up to their old place of solace. Hassan asked Amir to play, and Amir reluctantly agreed. This moment of verbal exchange signifies the first attempt of many on Hassan's part to rekindle the former relationship the boys shared. Hassan, instead of Amir, seeks healing for himself. His dignity is soiled and he seeks companionship from his ally from birth: Amir. However, Amir refuses, but gives Hassan no reason. Finally, Hassan confronts him, asking what he has done wrong. Amir replies: "'I want you to stop harassing me. I want you to go away,' I snapped. I

wished he would give it right back to me, break open the door and tell me off—it would have made things easier, better. But he didn't do anything like that, and when I opened the door minutes later, he wasn't there. I fell on my bed, buried my head under my pillow and cried" (Hosseini 88). This demonstrates one of many of Amir's attempts to deal with his grief. Later, he again deals with his shame by antagonizing Hassan in order to get a physically violent reaction. In Amir's attempt to suppress his story, violence is only one of his responses.

As time elapses, Amir realizes that both Hassan and Hassan's father knew of Amir's silence, which highlights the differences of traumatic coping responses in the lives of Amir and Hassan. In the confrontation between Amir's father and Hassan's father, Amir realizes something: "And that led to another understanding: Hassan knew. He knew I'd seen everything in that alley, that I'd stood there and done nothing" (Hosseini 105). Ali confronts Baba, in order to leave Kabul in hopes of a fresh start in another city in Afghanistan. Amir also comes to understand something else: "Ali drew Hassan to him. . . . It was a protective gesture and I knew whom Ali was protecting him from. Ali glanced my way and in his cold, unforgiving look, I saw that Hassan had told him. He had told him everything . . ." (106). Through admission, Hassan finds some healing through storytelling. Amir, however, does not find such closure. Van der Kolk speaks about the lack of closure when he says: "Silence about trauma also leads to death—the death of the soul. Silence reinforces the godforsaken isolation of trauma" (234). Instead, Amir navigates life in Afghanistan without Hassan's presence in his life. Quickly, tensions rise, culminating in the invasion of the Soviets.

Amir offers no insight into his life for five years, but returns narrating his journey out of Afghanistan to Pakistan because of the invasion of the Soviets. The return to a continuous narrative is deceitful. Though Amir begins a new story, he still speaks of Hassan's situation.

Amir, continuously haunted by his inaction, cannot speak about the flashbacks that his waking life triggers. Moving past Hassan's rape is immediately juxtaposed with the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviets. In this way, Amir still speaks of Hassan, though unconsciously. In the heat of a tense moment, as Amir and his father are threatened at gunpoint by Soviets, Amir's thoughts jump to Hassan (Hosseini 116). For the rest of Amir's narration, he balances between memories of Hassan and his childhood, full of innocence, and flashbacks to the ultimate horror. Amir left both Afghanistan and Hassan, and now both are connected in his mind as objects of repression.

Amir flees to the United States for political reasons, but retains hope of closure. Amir says, "For me, America was a place to bury my memories. For Baba, a place to mourn his" (Hosseini 129). However, in almost every major moment and action in Amir's life after Hassan leaves, he muses on Hassan's whereabouts or a recollects a related memory. Chambial and Sharma provide insight: "Nevertheless, even after their separation they are unable to expunge each other's memories from their minds and hearts" (169). Though absent physically, Hassan's person carries a great significance on Amir's emotions and experiences. With silence firmly established as the source of shame, Amir perpetuates this secret for the next twenty-five years. The effect of his shame is the same as the cause itself: silence. In order to conceal his shame, Amir deeply internalizes it. Speaking of it to no one, he hopes to find healing through the fading of all memories associated with Hassan and Afghanistan. However, amnesia never happens for him. Instead, Hassan's presence in his life remains through the resilience of memory. This silence also impairs the completion of story because Amir's departure from Afghanistan to the United States seems to provide a new story for the narrator; however, this change in scenery does not mark the beginning of a new story.

One mention of Hassan at Amir's graduation gives him a physical reaction: "Then Baba rolled his head toward me. 'I wish Hassan had been with us today,' he said. A pair of steel hands closed around my windpipe at the sound of Hassan's name. I rolled down the window. Waited for the steel hands to loosen the grip" (Hosseini 134). Years later, even the mention of Hassan's name causes a physiological reaction for Amir. He carefully avoids repeating the name and awkwardly deflects the comment. However, the evidence of his trauma is clear. Later, when Amir courts his soon-to-be wife, he listens as she reveals personal secrets. He says, "I envied her. Her secret was out. Spoken. Dealt with. I opened my mouth and almost told her how I'd betrayed Hassan, lied, driven him out, and destroyed a forty-year relationship between Baba and Ali. But I didn't" (165). Even in a new country, interacting with people who do not know Hassan, Amir cannot tell the story. His swallowing of shame impedes healing, because of both continual silence about his original guilt and his silence about his continuous and intrusive memories involving Hassan.

Though Amir follows the conventions of Afghani culture, he does so unconsciously. In coming to America, he forgets many of the culturally implicit codes of Afghani life, particularly in regards to courtship practices. Amir forgets or ignores customs of Afghanistan upon his arrival to America. Honoring customs means remembering Hassan. During his wedding, however, he meditates on Hassan. Amir muses, "And I remember wondering if Hassan too had married. And if so, whose face he had seen in the mirror under the veil? Whose henna-painted hands had he held?" (Hosseini 171). In this musing, Amir merely wonders at the circumstances of Hassan's life. Amir's sharp return to traditional Afghani customs at his wedding elicits thoughts of Hassan, because of the interchangeable nature of the two ideas. When his book becomes published, a huge accomplishment in his career, Amir's thoughts drifts to Hassan: "And I

thought of Hassan. *Some day*, Inshallah, *you will be a great writer*, he had said once, *and people all over the world will read your stories*. There was so much goodness in my life. So much happiness. I wondered whether I deserved any of it" (183). Non-communication traps him in his mind, causing his memories to mercilessly haunt him. He is allowed no relief in the form of community because of his self-imposed restrictions.

Rahim Khan calls Amir later that night. Amir cannot sleep after the phone call and says: "At some point, maybe just before dawn, I drifted to sleep. And dreamed of Hassan running in the snow, the hem of his green *chapan* dragging behind him, snow crunching under his black rubber boots. He was yelling over his shoulder: *For you, a thousand times over*!" (Hosseini 194). This dream marks a return to subconscious hope. Through introducing the possibility of redemption, Amir dreams of Hassan in a positive way, instead of fixating on his rape. By returning to Islamabad, Amir must face what he has not before. This idea both terrifies and comforts him. Amir, upon returning, must face both his brother and his country. The story must be told.

Once in Islamabad, Amir speaks his half-brother's name for the first time in twenty-five years. He says, "'Hassan,' I said. When was the last I had spoken his name? Those thorny old barbs of guilt bore into me once more, as if speaking his name had broken a spell, set them free to torment me anew. Suddenly the air in Rahim Khan's little flat was too thick, too hot, too rich with the smell of the street" (Hosseini 202). Amir reluctantly shares Hassan's name: the first part of telling his story. Rahim Khan gives Amir a letter from Hassan, expunging him of blame. Hassan writes, "And I dream that someday you will return to Kabul to revisit the land of our childhood. If you do, you will find an old faithful friend waiting for you" (218). In this letter,

Hassan connects himself to Afghanistan, and even more specifically Kabul. Threads of narrative, which have served to tie the two together, converge at Hassan's own admission of connection.

Before finding Hassan's son Sohrab, Amir reveals his biological relationship between himself and Hassan to several people. However, he tells his wife the entire source of his shame first. His wife hears the entire story before anyone else. Amir experiences emotional release: "Then I did what I hadn't done in fifteen years of marriage: I told my wife everything. Everything. I had pictured this moment so many times, dreaded it, but as I spoke, I felt something lifting off my chest" (Hosseini 325). Amir, through confrontation with this idea, finds courage to convey the narrative trapped inside him. This admission is not the only indicator of healing. The introduction of the character Sohrab, Hassan's orphan son, both allows Amir to tell another story and to conclude his previous one. The halted story is completed through Amir's admission of guilt, and the introduction of Sohrab indicates the beginning of a new story. Only through verbalization of his shame does Amir's focus shift from constant allusion of Hassan to a fatherly attention to Sohrab. This sharp shift in narrative focus reflects the conclusion of the previous story. Sohrab can receive the narrator's complete attention because he has now verbalized the story. A new story can be told. The circumstances of Sohrab's traumatized silence reflect Amir's previous experience and provide both a non-omniscient perspective and Amir's personal thoughts on the situation. Amir analyzes his nephew when he says: "It would be erroneous to say Sohrab was quiet. Quiet is peace. Tranquility. Quiet is turning down the VOLUME knob on life. Silence is pushing the OFF button. Shutting it down. All of it. . . . It was the silence of one who had taken cover in a dark place, curled up all the edges and tucked them under" (361). Sohrab's circumstances do not mirror Amir, but Amir now has a recipient of his story. In time, Amir's admission may provide healing to Sohrab.

The majority of this narrative focuses on the perpetuation of Amir's trauma. He cannot heal until he speaks his shame. His healing comes at an opportune time: he can now help his traumatized nephew find healing. Amir relates his own life to Sohrab: "I remembered something I had read somewhere a long time ago: *That's how children deal with terror. They fall asleep*" (Hosseini 342). Sohrab's story does not mimic Amir, but his response does. Like Amir, Sohrab halts his story. The narrator must now stall in a new story: Sohrab's trauma. Sohrab shares both the appearance and traumatic experience of his father, and therefore serves as both a replacement for Hassan and the opportunity to tell a new story. The novel ends with the hope that Amir will help Sohrab tell it.

Afghanistan provides the framework of the novel and propels the plot through the compiling of stories involving an Afghan childhood, which becomes halted and embedded with trauma. Amir's repression of trauma halts his ability to share stories. By finding healing through storytelling, he can share a different story. Hassan's rape provides both the propulsion and the perpetuation of the story. His rape informs Amir's life and halts it. Whereas his life after Hassan's rape halts the storytelling, his move to America suppresses that story. Through adult Amir's narration of the entire collection of events, which compose the Amir's narrative history, Amir finds closure. His confession to his wife begins the process, once he confronts both Hassan and Afghanistan. With this newly explored story, Amir now has the experience to help Sohrab tell his story. Though silence is Sohrab's primary defensive response, the novel closes with an incomplete story, but provides hope. In speaking of Hassan's rape, after twenty-five years of silence, Amir can begin a new story through his newly adopted son Sohrab.

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Essay

Claire Davis

Prospero as the Philosopher Prince:

An Examination of Machiavellianism and Platonism in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

Few authors have made such an impact on the western world as Machiavelli, Plato, and Shakespeare. Each author, though focused on vastly different subjects, all in some form or fashion comment upon human nature. Shakespeare, as the most current writer of this triad, draws upon two sources, both Machiavelli's assertions on the selfishness of humanity and Plato's hierarchy and order found in *The Republic*, in one of his last plays, *The Tempest*. Many traditional readings of *The Tempest* place Prospero, the ousted Duke of Milan, in the character role of the wise and knowledgeable Philosopher King charged with returning order to his world, both on the island and in Milan. While this reading may be accurate, Shakespeare's references to *The Prince* cannot be ignored, especially in light of the flaws in Prospero's character. Though Prospero can be the Philosopher King to both his subjects in Milan and on the island, he renounces that role in order to ensure his own safety and comfort, reflecting more of a Machiavellian leadership style while keeping his Platonic roots.

While Prospero is ruler of Milan, he reflects a more Platonist leadership style, spending his time learning rather than remaining in worldly concerns. Shakespeare immediately draws connections between this disgraced duke and Plato's Philosopher King in numerous ways, sparing no allusion or misunderstanding. The first line about Prospero comes from his own daughter, Miranda, as she demands why he was using his magic to sink the ship just off the shore of their island: "If by your art, my dearest father, you have / put the wild waters in this roar . . ."

(1.2.85-6). Before the audience ever sees or meets this orchestrator, they associate him with these "arts," evidence of great power and skill, and conflate him with his knowledge, which gives him power. Plato, too, identifies a character in his *Republic* by his knowledge and skills: the Philosopher King, whom he describes as free from worldly vices and the most knowledgeable on the true state of the world. Prospero also shares a purpose with Plato's Philosopher King in that both characters are charged with bringing their domains to order: "Prospero's task is to restore order and degree to a chaotic situation by using his superior intellect, power and moral sense" (Beck 87). Since Prospero is both the most educated and thus the most powerful in the play, the role of a Philosopher King ought to come naturally to him.

Shakespeare further builds this allusion through the severely hierarchical structure of the characters on the island. Each of the characters fits in the scale of importance established by Shakespeare, Caliban holding the place of the lowest and most base while the airy Ariel heads the group, held only in servitude to Prospero by a favor. Arlene Oseman affirms this reading of the play's character relationship, asserting that humanist philosophy appealed to many in the noble classes, as it affirmed their status through Plato's theories that the best men morally ought to end up being the best socially and economically (7). With the sudden interest in classical and Italian writings as well as the need to keep his monarch happy, Shakespeare's allusions to Plato are neither unreasonable nor unprecedented.

In another, looser allusion, some scholars, like philosopher Nathan Schlueter, argue that *The Tempest* ought to be read as a dialogue between Prospero's baser nature, portrayed by Caliban, and his spiritual nature, personified in Ariel (181). In this interpretation, the island becomes not Prospero's prison but the place where he proves to the world (or, at least, some of the most important men in Italy) his ability to overcome his failings and find a way to rule all

varieties of people. In addition, Prospero's place in the dialogue as the mediator between two forces parallels Socrates' role in many of Plato's works, which only furthers the parallel between Prospero and the Philosopher King.

However, before he arrives at the island, Prospero fails his role as the Philosopher King by taking his obsession with learning to a fault, forsaking his subjects for knowledge and essentially handing his kingdom over to his brother. When he relates Miranda's past to her, he admits that his over-concern in his studies leads to his own ruin:

> I, thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated
>
> to closeness and the bettering of my mind
>
> with that which, but by being so retired,
>
> O'er-prized all popular rate, in my false brother
>
> awaked an evil nature. . . (1.2.190-194)

The preoccupation of learning over worldly needs seems like a Platonic ideal, but Socrates views true leadership as a careful balance of enlightenment and worldly concerns. Several times throughout the Allegory of the Cave, Socrates acknowledges that "it isn't surprising that the ones who get to this point [of enlightenment] are unwilling to occupy themselves with human affairs and that their souls are always pressing upwards, eager to spend their time above" (189). Nevertheless, he cautions that "we mustn't allow [the enlightened] . . . to stay there and refuse to go down again to the prisoners in the cave and share their labors and honors" (189). To be the best Philosopher King possible, one must not only strive for understanding the divine but also seek to share the happiness with his subjects (192). By remaining in his study and refusing the duties of his office, Prospero has neglected to fulfill his foremost duty, that of spreading good to his subjects.

Furthermore, if the island is meant to be a test for Prospero's ability to rule, then he ought to overcome his faults during the space of the play. Plato outlines the faults and necessary characteristics of the Philosopher King in his discussion of the Allegory of the Cave, setting the bar high for Prospero:

> If a nature of this sort had been hammered at from childhood and freed from the
> bonds of kinship with becoming, which have been fastened to it by feasting,
> greed, and other such pleasure and which, like leaden weights, pull its vision
> downwards – if, being rid of these, it turned to look at true things, then I say that
> the same soul of the same person would see these most sharply, just as it now
> does the things it is presently turned towards. (191)

If the viewer decides that Prospero becomes the Philosopher King by the conclusion, then between his time in Milan and the end of the play, Prospero must overcome his extreme greed for knowledge. An easy solution that would fall exactly in line with the duties of the Philosopher King would be for Prospero to share his learning and knowledge with his "subjects" on the island, which consist of his daughter Miranda and Caliban. After all, Socrates maintains that "the power to learn is present in everyone's soul" and that the role of the enlightened few is to act on their pity of the unlearned and bring them to an understanding of the divine "good" (188,190). Nevertheless, it is originally Miranda who angrily berates Caliban for abusing her generosity in teaching him to speak:

> . . . I pitied thee,
>
> Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
>
> One thing or other: when thou didst not, savage,
>
> Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like

> A thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes
>
> With words that made them known. (1.2.506-11)

Even though these lines were later given to Prospero, as they were deemed too strong and passionate for a girl of Miranda's status and age to give politely (McGinnis 1), most modern texts refer to Miranda's ownership of these lines, which makes a condemning point about Prospero. He does not take up his role as a Philosopher King and teach the unenlightened about the world; instead, his daughter takes it upon herself to satisfy her pity and teach Caliban as far as she can.

Delving beyond the traditional Platonic reading of *The Tempest*, it becomes apparent that Shakespeare is not interested in exploring the depths of the Philosopher King's worthy struggle. Rather, he, like Machiavelli, is concerned with the application of "real politics," or how people are rather than how they ought to be (Coombes 34). Oseman agrees with this theory, stating that "both [Shakespeare and Machiavelli] invest their creative and critical efforts in acknowledging and exploring the reality of disjunctive human beings who inhabit a world of capricious fortune and consequence" (9). Viewing Prospero as Machiavelli's Prince and not Plato's Philosopher King solves the inconsistencies in Prospero's noble character by instead revealing him as a self-interested and politically savvy mastermind.

Interestingly enough, Shakespeare still uses Platonic theories to support his Machiavellian view on life and leadership, molding Prospero into the epitome of a Philosopher King turned corrupt. For example, Prospero's illusions all feature music, pageantry, and sometimes even classical mythology, such as his show for the Court where the magical feast is interrupted by Ariel, disguised as a harpy and reciting elegies. Each of these things are outlawed in Plato's Republic, as "an imitator has no worthwhile knowledge of the things he imitates, that

imitation is a kind of game and not something to be taken seriously, and that all the tragic poets, whether they write in iambics or hexameters, are as imitative as they could possibly be" (273). Instead, Prospero makes his power known through these imitations, acting specifically against Plato's stipulations that the "guardians must be kept away from all other crafts so as to be the craftsmen of the city's freedom, and be exclusively that, and do nothing at all except what contributes to it, they must neither do nor imitate anything else" (71). In contrast, Machiavelli encourages a ruler's use of illusions, advising that ". . . it is useful to seem compassionate, faithful, humane, honest, religious – and to be so, but to stay so constructed in your spirit that if it is necessary not to be these things, you are able and know how to become the contrary" (95). In perhaps the most condemning symbolism against Prospero in the play, Shakespeare repeatedly calls Prospero's makeshift home on the island a cave, a direct allusion to Plato's allegory. By making Prospero, who has had ample time to build himself a house out of any of the apparently numerous trees on the island, proud of living in a cave, Shakespeare pointedly tells his audience of the immature and unenlightened nature of Prospero's intellect; he reverses the nature of the Philosopher King, who is supposed to learn from the surface and bring the knowledge back inside rather than conceive of his tricks in the dark of a cave. In this direct counter against Plato's philosophy and, by extension, acceptance of Machiavelli's advice, Shakespeare illustrates his knowledge of the inner workings of both texts and sets them in opposition, mixing Plato's corruption of an ideal leader with the Machiavellian model.

Shakespeare does not avoid alluding to Machiavelli's work as well. In addition to Prospero's copious use of magic to continue his power, he achieves Machiavelli's dream of uniting Italy through the marriage of his daughter to Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Naples. As Schlueter points out, Naples and Milan are the northernmost and southernmost regions in Italy

(185). While in reality this union makes little sense, its symbolic meaning is clear – through his manipulations, Prospero has secured for his lineage control over all of Italy, the end goal of Machiavelli's text. In addition, Prospero's very name is a reference to Machiavelli's claim that "fortune is the arbiters of half of our actions" and that the successful rulers turn Fortune to their own success (183). "Prospero" in Latin can mean "to succeed," but it also can be translated as "to render fortunate," affirming Machiavelli's presence in his character from his title.

Besides the textual allusions to *The Prince*, Shakespeare also reveals Machiavellian instincts in Prospero's learning style through his interactions with Ariel and Caliban. While they are very far removed in character and attitude, each creature remains in service to Prospero through his manipulations and show of love, though Shakespeare only implies this former love through Caliban's indignant curses. In Ariel's case, Prospero mainly uses misinformation to keep the spirit under his control. While there may be some sort of mystical pact keeping the spirit tied to the man, Prospero frequently reminds the spirit of its indebtedness to him by constantly relating the story of how he found it. He says:

> . . . I must
>
> Once in a month recount what thou hast been,
>
> which thou forget'st. This damn'd witch Sycorax . . .
>
> . . . she did confine thee,
>
> by help of her more potent ministers, . . .
>
> . . . into a cloven pine; within which rift
>
> imprison'd thou didst painfully remain
>
> a dozen years. (1.2.397-415)

Machiavelli speaks often in his work about indebtedness, advising it only when the situation involves another nation owing the Prince. He maintains that "if the one whom you adhere to wins, although he is powerful and you remain at his discretion, he is obliged to you, and there is a contract of love; and men are never so dishonest that in a very great example of ingratitude they would oppress you" (Machiavelli 110). Prospero also furthers Ariel's debt by constantly reminding the spirit of his own good will, repeating that "it was mine art / when I arrived and heard thee, that made gape / the pine, and let thee out" (1.2.428-30). For Ariel's cooperation in his plans, Prospero keeps the illusion of good will and indebtedness present in Ariel's mind, as Ariel is the only way most of his illusions work and is necessary to Prospero's plans. As a result, Ariel often calls him "noble master" and only balks at Prospero's bidding once, eager for the most part to do the work requested of him.

Prospero does not have such luck with Caliban. While his attempts were successful at the beginning, as Caliban's plaintive opening monologue implies (1.2.481-95), Prospero does not fully lead him to enlightenment, instead keeping him only as educated as Prospero needs for Caliban to serve him well. As Prospero cannot take the time to gather his own food and firewood, he forces Caliban to do it, painting Caliban's services to him and Miranda as necessary (1.2.455-9). As Prospero begins to lose his grip on Caliban's love, though, he turns to Machiavelli's advice on entering foreign and formerly free provinces: "in a republic, there is greater life, greater hatred, more desire for revenge. Nor does the memory of their ancient liberty ever allow them to rest, nor can it, so that the most secure way is to eliminate them or live there" (Machiavelli 54). In addition to keeping close quarters with his subject, Prospero also utilizes the most famous of Machiavelli's advice, which is the maintaining fear over subjects in lieu of love: "The prince must make himself feared in such a way that, although he does not acquire love, he

avoids hatred . . . and this he will always do if he abstains from the property of his citizens and his subjects, and from their women" (92). When Prospero prevents Caliban from using Miranda to "peopled else the whole isle with Calibans" (1.2.502-3), he transgresses against the love that Caliban holds for him by taking his "woman" away from him. While this scene leads to Caliban's insubordination, Prospero acts in favor of his private, individual will rather than the good of the state, turning the body politic into a master-slave relationship instead. Therefore, in order to ensure Caliban's cooperation, Prospero orders physical torment. Nevertheless, Caliban even loses this fear of Prospero's powers, becoming bolder in his insults and allowing him to transfer his loyalty to Trinculo and Stephano when the time comes (2.2.1203-6). Keeping Caliban near his cave as well constantly reminding him of Prospero's powers over him maintains Prospero's control over the creature until the abuse becomes too much.

Caliban serves another purpose in the play besides bearing the brunt of Prospero's wrath: he represents Machiavelli's pessimistic view of man in a caricature. Machiavelli asserts that "men are so very simple, and they so well obey present necessities, that he who deceives will always find someone who will allow himself to be deceived" (94), which describes the relationship between the deceiver Prospero becomes on the island and the hapless nature of Caliban. Even after his rudimentary education, Caliban still finds masters that would use him for their own benefit and not his own, allying himself to the drunk servants because "[they] be fine things, an if they be not sprites. / That's a brave god, and bears celestial liquor; / I will kneel to him" (2.2.1203-5). Through this innocent deference to tricky masters, Caliban often furthers his masters' interests in expense of his own health and safety, personifying Machiavelli's maxim that "whoever causes someone else to become powerful is ruined" (54). Furthermore, even Miranda asserts that Caliban's base nature is the reason behind his evilness and insubordination,

saying "thy vile race, / thought thou didst learn, had that in 't which good natures / could not abide to be with" (1.2.511-3). Though a gross over-exaggeration, Caliban more closely represents a Machiavellian view of the masses than a Platonic one, which asserts that everyone has the ability to learn and become great.

While Prospero easily gains control of the island and its inhabitants, he remains dissatisfied, fixated on his loss of Milan. Nevertheless, his practice on the island pays off as he begins the coup against his brother and the court in order to win back his throne. By bringing his enemies into his natural territory, Prospero ensures the confusion and helplessness of his victims even more so than if he had brought his spirits and tricks to Milan. Furthermore, he is already at an advantage as the former and rightful leader of Milan. While Antonio shows signs of being the better Machiavellian through his moral relativism, namely in convincing Sebastian to kill the king and success in ousting his brother from the outset (2.1.921-1035), he is a relative newcomer to the throne and by all accounts ought to have never held that position. Machiavelli affirms this, saying that "even if [the prince] is so deprived [of his province], whenever the occupier experiences some mishap he reacquires it" (42). Such a terrifying situation as a shipwreck and all the magical terrors to which Prospero subjects his enemies certainly counts as a mishap, but Prospero goes further, holding Antonio's conspiracy to murder the King over him in order to assure Prospero's re-entry into the dukedom (5.1.2163-6). With so much in his favor and at his disposal, Prospero works his way into a winning position, no matter what Antonio does.

However well it fits Prospero's character and explains his reasoning, a Machiavellian reading of *The Tempest* does little to account for Prospero's decision to give up his enchantments:

> . . . [I'll] break my staff
>
> Bury it certain fathoms in the earth
>
> And deeper than did ever plummet sound
>
> I'll drown my book. (5.1.2075-8)

Machiavelli advocates that the Prince retain as much power as possible in his exploits, and Prospero still has a long voyage to go before arriving in Milan, where any number of supposed accidents could ensure Antonio's grasp on the title. However, Prospero here is not talking to anyone other than the audience, keeping the illusion of his unnatural powers secure in case of any attempts on his life. Furthermore, in appearing to give up his powers and become more human than divine, Prospero works an illusion over the audience. Stephan Laqué argues that in order to be a successful character, Prospero has to not only enchant the other players but also placate the audience, charming them to his side (155). Prospero is the only character who supplies backstory throughout the entire play, manipulating both the characters and the audience with his version of the story. Telling the audience of his plan to return to more fair ruling methods corrects any bounds he may have overstepped in his revenge on the island, guaranteeing him sympathy and audience satisfaction. A comedy, after all, is meant to right the wrongs found present in the situation, and Prospero cannot maintain a favorable reputation among viewers if he keeps the power struggle seemingly out of proportion. His propensity to use "magic" words has already been seen in his spells – how much more powerful is he with his rhetoric, a weapon more powerful in the streets of Milan than a deserted isle?

Through the predominantly Machiavellian actions of Prospero in the play, Shakespeare reflects a more Machiavellian view of human nature, implying that Plato's philosopher king is a useless ideal in this reality. Though Prospero may have attempted to realize Plato's dream of a

Philosopher King, he gets caught in the advantages of enlightenment rather than ruling, seeking his own pleasure rather than the good of the state, which is the Philosopher King's entire point. When this imbalance leads to Prospero's exile on the island, he turns his needs into the needs of the island, following the selfish attitude that Machiavelli claims is necessary for any good Prince. Whether Shakespeare meant to portray a basic reading of the Philosopher King or a deeper look at current political theory, *The Tempest* reveals his world view of a flawed humanity that matches Machiavelli's perception of society, wherein ideals are not to be bothered with and practicality calls for flexible morals and acting necessarily to remain in power rather than following the divine good.

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Emily London

Heart of Obscurity: Linguistic Ambiguity in *Heart of Darkness*

T
he titular darkness of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* concerns not only the human depravity the novel contains but also the uncertainty surrounding the implications of Marlow's tale. Contemporary scholars frequently deem the ideology and practice of imperialism and racism presented in *Heart of Darkness* as ethically objectionable at best. Nonetheless, however easily the modern reader may condemn Kurtz's actions and the imperialist mindset, the prose itself evidently does not do the same. Marlow and other characters who describe Kurtz within the narrative choose vague language and imagery to enshroud the reality of Kurtz's actions which allows both Marlow and the reader to admire and hate the man simultaneously. The novel itself also employs ambiguity resulting in a similar effect for the reader. *Heart of Darkness* presents the problem of linguistic obscurity even as it uses ambiguity to allow for contradictory perspectives concerning both the imperialist endeavor and the narrative itself.

The hazy impression the General Manager gives in speaking with Marlow initiates the haze of ambiguity in the novel. In talking with him, Marlow becomes fixated on the man's facial expression: "there was only an undefinable, faint expression of his lips, something stealthy—a smile—not a smile—I remember it, but I can't explain" (Conrad 21). The motif of mystery in the novel begins here, setting up this character's thoughts as ultimately indefinable for the observer. The meaning of his words will also be enshrouded—bearing significance especially as the

General Manager's words will contribute to Marlow's initial experience of Kurtz through secondary means. The smile of the General Manager "came at the end of his speeches like a seal applied on the words to make the meaning of the commonest phrase appear absolutely inscrutable" (21). His secrecy suggests that, for Marlow and for the reader, language will not plainly convey the reality of the novel. The impression the General Manager leaves on Marlow will parallel the enigma of *Heart of Darkness*'s central character and representative of imperialism, Mr. Kurtz.

The inscrutable language the General Manager uses to describe Kurtz contributes to the novel's momentum toward Marlow's encounter with Kurtz in the flesh. The General Manager first speaks of "rumours that a very important station was in jeopardy and its chief, Mr. Kurtz, was ill" (22). This hearsay only captures a fragment of the dire situation awaiting Marlow down the river, and it does not fully prepare him, or the reader, for what Marlow will find. Instead, Kurtz's tainted mental state and the actions that result from it are simply summed up by the General Manager in terms of a possible business failure. He likewise sets up Kurtz as simply an exemplary employee (25). Marlow remembers, "Then he began again assuring me Mr. Kurtz was the best agent he had, an exceptional man, of the greatest importance to the Company" (22). Again, through its ambiguity, a fundamentally truthful description eclipses the role Kurtz has taken on. Later in the novel, Marlow sees that Kurtz has also become exploitative in his successful service to the company and deified by the indigenous people he subjugates. He does not, however, experience this reality through the accounts spoken to him. Marlow's misunderstanding of the General Manager's description of Kurtz demonstrates the ability of ambiguous language, within the imperialist effort, to convey the illusion of significant information while neglecting to communicate what is essential for understanding reality.

The Russian, a devoted disciple of Kurtz, also illustrates the disparity between the reality of Kurtz's actions and the oblique language used to describe him in the novel. Similar to how he reacts to the General Manager, Marlow finds the Russian "inexplicable, and altogether bewildering" (54). The Russian serves as another figure whose words will set up a lack of clarity surrounding the person of Kurtz. When recounting the audiences listening to Kurtz, the Russian simply says that Kurtz spoke about "Everything! Everything!" (55). Though the Russian is either unable or unwilling to fully convey all Kurtz communicated in these talks, his explanation of the conversations evidences their power over him: "He made me see things—things" (55). Marlow can only know the greatness Kurtz's follower sees in him as a result of his eloquence in the Russian's ambiguous explanation. The influence of Kurtz's words, according to Marlow, "appeared about the most dangerous thing in every way he had come upon so far" (55). Marlow's insight here demonstrates the power of words even as their specific expression remains unclear.

As Marlow continues to interact with him, the Russian more directly withholds knowledge by talking ambiguously about Kurtz. When Marlow tries to "speak plainly" about Kurtz raiding the natives, the Russian only nods and indirectly affirms Marlow's suspicions (56). He is primarily concerned with convincing Marlow that "you can't judge Mr. Kurtz as you would an ordinary man" (56). Though these words fail to fully convey the horror of Kurtz's actions, they mirror the nebulous opinion of Kurtz that Marlow comes to in the novel. He will have his own firsthand experience with Kurtz, describing his way with words as "the unbounded power of eloquence—of words—of burning noble words" (50) in a notably admiring tone. Marlow more explicitly explains his admiration near the end of the novel: "Kurtz was a remarkable man" because "he had something to say. He said it" (70). Yet Marlow also sees the

atrocities Kurtz has committed and recoils (57). The Russian's and the General Manager's descriptions of Kurtz allow for Marlow's contradictory view of Kurtz through their ambiguity.

Even when Marlow experiences Kurtz firsthand, linguistic uncertainty remains. Perhaps the most vague words contained in *Heart of Darkness* arise from Kurtz himself. His cry of "The horror! The horror!" at his death is both the most famous phrase of the novel and the most enshrouded of meaning (Conrad 69). Lionel Trilling, in reasoning through a reading of Kurtz as a "hero of the spirit" (qtd. in Watt 390) through Marlow's eyes, draws from this deathbed cry to demonstrate this understanding he sees in the text (Watt 390-391). Watt points to the inherent ambiguity in the famous phrase: "Perhaps Trilling values Kurtz as a hero of the spirit in part because he himself does not clearly see the horror" (391). The debate as to what Kurtz's final words mean, whether a fear of death or final revelation of human depravity, or any other reading, only illustrates the ambiguity contained in the prose even more. Kurtz's words, and indeed Conrad's language as well, allow for a number of contradictory opinions.

As seen in Kurtz's deathbed cry, obscurity of language in *Heart of Darkness* serves not only the imperialist effort but also the narrative of the novel itself. The novel opens with a contrast between Marlow's forthcoming tale and the "yarns of seamen" that "have a direct simplicity" (5). Instead, as "a glow brings out a haze" (5), the meaning of his story emanates from the text in a more ambiguous fashion, neither directly conveyed through his words nor easily understood. Watt further describes the implications of Conrad's technique of linguistic ambiguity in his analysis: "this meaning will be only as fitfully and tenuously visible as a hitherto unnoticed presence of dust particles and water vapour in a space that normally looks dark and void" (Watt 350). His comments suggest that this ambiguity allows readers to view the novel's desolate subject matter as less dark than it would conventionally seem.

Conrad further explores his narrative technique through Marlow's frustration at his own obscurity:

> Do you see the story? Do you see anything? It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream—making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream- sensation, that commingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt [. . .] . . . No, it is impossible; it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence—that which makes its truth, its meaning—its subtle and penetrating essence. (27)

Marlow's agitation demonstrates the novel's cognizance of its own tendency to communicate unclearly. He knows the limitations of language (27), especially the effect of linguistic ambiguity in his narrative. Language that does not fully convey reality complements the story of Kurtz and Marlow's complex reaction to him, yet it is inherently limited precisely because of that quality. "[A]bsurdity, surprise, and bewilderment" (27) can and must commingle in the minds of Marlow and of the reader. In short, if *Heart of Darkness*'s form is to imitate the haziness of Marlow's meaning, then the novel's prose and meaning must also be unclear.

Marlow's frustrated questioning also explicitly compares the ambiguity of the novel's prose with its narrated ambiguity surrounding the character of Kurtz. Earlier in the same section, Marlow recounts that Kurtz "was just a word for me. I did not see the man in the name any more than you do" (27). Similar to Marlow's listeners, the reader also knows Kurtz only through Marlow's words, even as in much of his story Marlow knows him only through other's accounts. The outcome of such a comparison allows the reader to hold an ambivalent view toward the subject of the novel—imperialism—as Marlow does the same with imperialism's representative, Kurtz.

It is precisely the ambiguity of the novel that also lends complexity to how it may be interpreted. The reader, alongside Marlow, is free to both praise and blame imperialism and its representative, Kurtz, in the inconclusive wake of *Heart of Darkness'*s prose. According to Patrick Brantlinger, one of Conrad's themes in the novel is "the problem of rendering any judgment whatsoever—moral, political, metaphysical—about Marlow's narrative" (387). If Marlow does not demand absolutely judgment of the narrative in any of these areas, then neither does the prose demand this decision from the reader about Kurtz or imperialism itself. As Marlow holds an unsure and even contradictory view of these things, so does the novel evoke indecision as well.

In recognition of the fluidity of Conrad's prose, some have perceived it as a moral condemnation of Kurtz and imperialism instead of freedom from that imperative. Brantlinger postulates that such linguistic ambiguity "can be seen as referring to lying idealism that can rationalize any behavior, to a complete separation between words and meaning, theory and practice" (394). He concludes, "on this level, *Heart of Darkness* offers a devastating critique of imperialist ideology" (394). Though the novel unquestionably showcases the danger of obscure language in service to imperialism, it does not force the reader to make such a value judgment. By making use of the selfsame ambiguity in the narrative, it demonstrates the capability of such language to allow for indecision and complex reception.

Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* exemplifies the literary technique of form imitating content to result in ambivalence toward its subject matter in Kurtz and imperialism. The novel makes use of the very problem it presents—linguistic ambiguity—to abstain from demanding a moral judgment from the reader. In doing so, its prose showcases the capability of language to allow for indecision when communicating accurately yet vaguely. It also illustrates the possibility of

misconstruing expectations in doing so, as evidenced by Marlow's experiences of Kurtz as only a voice. The novel presents a tenuous relationship between language and the reality it seeks to convey, a relationship that permits problematic conclusions about imperialism in the novel.

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Margaret Mason

Bronte "Eyres" Out Victorian Class Oppression: Economic Liminality in *Jane Eyre*

"For shame! For shame!" cried the lady's-maid. "What shocking conduct, Miss Eyre, to strike a young gentleman, your benefactress's son! Your young master."

"Master! How is he my master? Am I a servant?" "No, you are less than a servant, for you do nothing for your keep" (Bronte 6).

In this exchange between Mrs. Reed's lady's maid and ten-year-old Jane Eyre can be heard Karl Marx's idea that industrial society subjugates those not in possession of capital. Cruel Mrs. Reed enforces strict dominion in her household through enforcing economic classification. Jane's lack of capital determines her poor treatment. In industrial, Victorian England, one's contribution through capital reigned most important. Here, in Victorian society, who could be more vulnerable than an unwanted, abject, female orphan? No one. From the start of the novel, we see Jane as both unequal and an "other." Moreover, in her time as a governess, Jane is further displaced in Victorian society as an educated, independently minded governess and the object of her employer's affection. Furthermore, she is equal to her employer in every way but her wealth. Throughout her life, she navigates being stuck in a liminal role between classes. After fleeing Thornfield to abandon her life as a governess, Jane inherits capital from her long lost uncle. It is not until after inheriting wealth that Jane asserts herself as a functioning and accepted member of society, which indicates a fundamental sociological problem with how one maintains his or her individual identity in a constructed society. In conjunction with identity, the

novel considers how Jane's state aggravates her position in her different households. Jane Eyre's economic liminality as an educated, female orphan and governess exposes her fractured socioeconomic circumstances and allows her to create an identity independent of Victorian class restrictions.

Jane's femininity and heroism dominate many critical discussions of *Jane Eyre*. While some of Bronte's most noted critics like Sandra Gilbert and Kate Washington argue that Jane purely offers insight into the female condition of Victorian society, others like Richard Benvenuto contend that as a bildungsroman character, she merely portrays superior moral qualities than the novel's other characters. In these studies, Jane is a heroine because she champions free individualism during the nineteenth century where women were beholden to men both in thought and deed. My study will not examine the complexities of Jane's feminine and moral limitations. However, my findings will challenge the work of earlier literary scholars who tend to assume that Bronte was unaware of economics or the Industrialization. If critics like Gilbert had looked closely at Jane's economic constrictions in the book, they would be unable to deny that money decided her fate just as much as her femininity. When looking at the work as a whole, Jane was restricted not just by her femininity but because she lacked capital and a family.

Because Bronte lived in West Riding Yorkshire, which became the wool industry's hub, *Jane Eyre* lends itself even more so to a Marxist, economic interpretation. Bronte was not isolated but aware of Industrialization. Industrialization encroached upon Bronte through her father's work as the town's curate. He often met with the men in his congregation who had industrial jobs at the Bronte's house. Economic historian Fredrick Glover affirms, "The wool textile manufacture of the West Riding of Yorkshire during the period 1780 to 1860 constitutes one of the classic examples of industrial transformation" (1). Not only was West Riding an

example of manufactured capitalism in rural Britain, but it shows an area's turn to industry as a way of life. An area once typified by isolation became characterized by its capital: wool. In 1847, the year *Jane Eyre* was published, the wool industry increased its employment in West Riding by 10,234 people (Glover 11). As a result, Bronte has authority to critique both social and economic conditions through *Jane Eyre*. In light of West Riding, Jane not only breaches her own limitations but also exposes Bronte's thoughts on how new industry destroyed female identity. Nineteenth-century women were wedded to the genteel Victorian class because it gave them a position in society. In his study of Industrialization, Pat Hudson discloses, "the family [is] a 'site' for the construction of new social relations of production wherein women's work was of increasing significance" (34). As income earners and participants in Industrialization, women like Jane have fractured identities. The domestic and vocational spheres created by Industrialization oppose one another because while a piece of feminine identity remains in the home, the other now belongs to factories.

If Bronte does critique Industrialization's creation of fractured female identities, then Jane's vocational alienation throughout the novel becomes more important. For example, at Lowood, Jane questions her stasis saying,

> It is in vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquility: they must have activity; and they will make it if they cannot find it. Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions besides political rebellions… Women are supposed to be very calm generally . . . it is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more than custom has pronounced for their sex. (Bronte 108-9)

Here, Jane notices her lack of agency and difference from other women because of her classification as a laborer. Like Jane, Marx notes that "the development of industry" creates "an incoherent mass [of laborers] scattered over the whole country" (Marx 73). As a student at Lowood and governess, Jane is a part of the mass of laborers who are in silent revolt against their discriminating classifications. Therefore, if Bronte is fighting against her industrial surroundings through Jane's thoughts and actions, how we read *Jane Eyre* needs to change from purely Feminist to also Marxist.

Further, Bronte questions if Jane can create her own identity or if only society grants Jane humanity. Throughout *Jane Eyre*, tension exists between Jane's efforts to function in society while under her society's economic constraints for her class development. To best understand these constraints, Marxist theory must be applied and analyzed in conjunction with the text. Marxist literary theory contends that "what drives historical change are the material realities of the economic base of society, rather than the ideological superstructure of politics, law, philosophy, religion, and art that is built upon that economic base" (Richter 1088). Furthermore, it primarily examines how class differences and economic constraints shape a person's success in his or her society. Marx asserts that "stable societies develop sites of resistance: contradictions build into the social system that ultimately lead to social revolution and the development of a new society upon the old" (1088). Thus, in *Jane Eyre*, Jane's primary economic liminal constraint shapes how others treat her. In *The Philosophy of Right; The Philosophy of History,* Hegel theorizes that modernity's division of society creates fragmented self-identities in people. Marxist and Hegelian thought are not necessarily complimentary but they work together to display Jane's unique situation.

As Marx explains in his *Manifesto,* there are two types of people: the bourgeois and the proletariat. However, among Jane's family (bourgeois) and their servants (proletariats), Jane is neither. She is "like nobody there" because "the spirit of [her] society in which Jane has no clear place enlarges the shadows and strengthens the locks on [her] door" (Bronte 10, Gilbert 782). She cannot leave her set abject station in life because she is a child. The bourgeois (family) need the proletariat (servants) but they do not need Jane. At Gateshead, the Reeds and their servants consider Jane an economic burden. The servants cannot accept Jane for fear of offending their masters. Moreover, the family refuses to accept her because they believe she is an economic inferior unfairly imposed on them.

As a child, Jane is alienated because Gateshead (the Reed's household) does not need Jane to function. Therefore, amongst the Reeds, Jane's existence is "a discord in Gateshead Hall; [she is] like nobody there . . ." (Bronte 10). Her social incongruity casts her as an outsider to the family. John Peters argues that Jane "is an intruder from the outside community" who "from the outset, the characters exclude" (57). Bessie expresses Jane's exclusion when unkindly asserting that unlike the Reed children who "will have a great deal of money" [Jane] "will have none" to sustain herself (7). Through Bessie's capitalist thought, Jane has and is nothing because without the support of a family to provide a dowry and connections, she cannot hope for either work or marriage. Jane cannot please or further her household (the state she inhabits). Her cousin John will inherit Gateshead once he comes of age. He has the weight and authority of capital on his side. As a result, he treats Jane terribly without any recourse. He "bullied and punished [her] not two to three times in the week, nor once or twice in the day, but continually" (4). As a male, he not only inherits the Reed fortune but also wields power because of his father's death. At fourteen, he is the master of Gateshead through status and his inferiors' fear of him. The

"servants did not like to offend their young master by taking [Jane's] part against him" so Jane lacked any companionship (4). To make it worse, John is very aware of his mastership. When he finds Jane hiding from the family to engage in reading, a creative and non-alienating activity, he pronounces,

> You have no business to take our books; you are a dependent, mama says;
>
> you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not
>
> to live here with gentlemen's children like us, and eat the same meals we
>
> do, and wear clothes at our mama's expense. Now, I'll teach you to
>
> rummage my book-shelves: for they are mine; all the house belongs to me,
>
> or will do in a few years. (5)

John's barbaric behavior prohibits Jane from engaging in self-gratifying hobbies and causes her to "lose all individual character," which isolates her from the rest of the house (Marx 71).

Though Gateshead is a household with an oppressor (Mrs. Reed), it misses a master (Mr. Reed). Gateshead (the state) is founded, but it is decaying since Mr. Reed, the true master, has died. He left his will for Mrs. Reed to fulfill; however, she deliberately fails to uphold "her pledge" due to her hatred of Jane who is "an uncongenial alien permanently intruded on her own family group" (Bronte 11). As Giffin points out, "the novel opens with young Jane at Gateshead Hall; an orphan living in a disordered state without a master" (Giffin 11). Though Mrs. Reed asserts dominion over Jane, she is not Jane's master but rather her steward. As steward, Mrs. Reed only has power while young John is too young to inherit Gateshead. Because Mrs. Reed does not raise Jane as a member of the family and uphold Mr. Reed's will, Gateshead is a failed and "disordered state" (11). His absence and Mrs. Reed's maltreatment allows Jane as "a heterogeneous thing" to be heroic and rise above her situation, because as Hegel affirms, ". . .

once the state has been founded, there can no longer be any heroes. They come on the scene only in uncivilized conditions" (Bronte 10, Hegel 79). The "uncivilized condition" Mrs. Reed creates by not adhering to her husband's promise to "rear and maintain [Jane] as one of her own children" allows Jane to emerge as a hero (Bronte 10). Jane's "uncivilized condition" pushes her to create her own self-identity, which conflicts with her later oppressors in the novel.

Mrs. Reed casts Jane as a leper because "[how] could she [Mrs. Reed] really like an interloper not of her race" (Bronte 11). Furthermore, Jane not only belongs to a separate "race" than Mrs. Reed but John dehumanizes Jane by calling her a "bad animal" (3). Because she cannot earn her keep like a servant, Jane is nothing more than an animal to the Reeds under Hegelian theory. Jane like "animals [is] in possession of [herself]; [her] soul is in [her] body. But [she has] no right to [her] life, because [she does] not will it" (Hegel 79). She possesses her soul and spirit but her lack of capital prohibits her right to choose a way of life for herself. The Reeds' idea of freedom conflicts with Jane's, so therefore, Jane's status must be lowered. They deprive Jane of status because the proletarians are "a class of laborers, who live only so long as they find work" (Marx 71). As a child and relative, Jane cannot belong to the proletariat class because she cannot work for or with them. Under Mrs. Reed's guidance, the young family treats Jane as less than a proletariat because she is dependent on them. Because Jane cannot squeeze into a role, Politi believes Jane's status is "fraught with ambiguity" (3). Without purpose, Jane cannot stay at Gateshead. Regardless of her familial ties, Jane must leave the Reed family where she can never belong because her identity cannot flourish. Her inability to fit in at the Reed's forces Jane to begin navigating her liminal role between classes as a child.

After being ejected from Gateshead, Mr. Brocklehurst whisks Jane away to a female orphanage where he fanatically asserts dominion over both the girls and their teachers. As the

"treasurer and manager of the establishment," he determines what the girls can do because he sets such a tight operation budget for the school (Bronte 46). However, he did not earn his position by merit but rather, his wealth was passed down to him. He privately owns the school and may exploit his workers (the young girls) for his own benefit. By limiting their access to basic needs including food, clothes, and warmth, he has an excess of money as the school's proprietor. The money that was apportioned for the school then went toward the furtherance of his family. While he "mortif[ies] in these girls the lust of the flesh [and] vanity," his own daughters are "splendidly attired in velvet, silk, and furs" (61). If as Marx implies, "laborers live exclusively by labor," then the girls are merely devices of their spartan-like education (Marx 100). Instead of having wills of their own, they become the tasks they are forced to accomplish like reading, sewing, and speaking French. Lowood School functions as a business where the orphans must work (get a suitable Victorian education) which causes them to lose their own identities. They are cut off from the rest of the world so as "not to accustom them to habits of luxury and indulgence" but to be "hardy, patient, and self-denying" (Bronte 59). As a result, their creativity is stifled. They do not have the opportunity to explore their potential talents but become "appendages of the machine" (Marx 71). Brocklehurst's treatment reduces the girls to duplicate machines that do not have identities apart from their labor or one another.

Further stifling their identity, Jane and her peers at Lowood are forced into subpar conditions regardless of their work ethic upon "graduation." In the Victorian era, "the Industrial Revolution opened up new venues for lower-class women, offering them new factory jobs in place of household work," but "it did not do much good for the middle class" (Jackson 1). Upon leaving the school, the girls must marry, teach in a school or as a family's governess, or be a destitute prostitute. Marriage was not a viable option for Jane because she could not entertain

suitors while locked behind the orphanage's doors. Unlike some of the other girls at the orphanage, she does not have distant relatives or friends looking for a potential companion for her. Jane refuses to submit to a will other than her own which eliminates prostitution and destitution. Additionally, both go against the moral code Jane learned from Mrs. Temple and Helen Burns at Lowood. So, Jane teaches, though, even in teaching, the inequality of the Victorian capitalist society limits Jane. Whether she is a governess or school teacher, the most money Jane makes in a year is "thirty pounds" (Bronte 86, 364). Regardless of her years of dedicated service to her education and household skills, Jane does not reap the benefits of capitalism because benefits are reserved for the bourgeois.

Jane is completely unprepared for entering into the world of the proletarians by living the life of a "nun" for the past eight years at Lowood (Bronte 122). On top of that, she does not have access to proletarians' world because she has a 'proper' Victorian education. Upon wondering how she should proceed when leaving Lowood, she questions, ". . . how do people do to get a new place? They apply to friends, I suppose: I have no friends" (84). If she was a member of the bourgeois or connected to gentility, she would either receive a position or in most cases, not need a job. Jane transitions into a proletariat by placing an advertisement in the newspaper to work as a governess. In advertising her skills, she becomes a "commodity, like every other article of commerce" for someone else to decide her worth (Marx 71). She is at the mercy of a member of the bourgeoisie to give her work. Once Jane begins work at Thornfield as Adele's governess, her ambiguous role in society only deepens.

As a governess, Jane acts as an intermediary between Mr. Rochester and his servants which further confuses her class placement. Like Thornfield's housekeeper Mrs. Fairfax, Jane may communicate with members of the upper class (Rochester and his friends) but only if the

upper class initiates conversation. Jeanne Peterson verifies the governess' unclear role by explaining that a governess had an "intimate position with the family" and was a means for a family to "display economic power, breeding, and station" (10). As a governess, Jane enters a liminal position with the family which nuances her role in the house, which is a microcosm of the state. While society does not consider Jane a mere servant like John and Leah, she is compared to an "incubi" who is "too stupid" to fully participate in the activities of the bourgeois (Bronte 178, 184). Jane is split between the servants and the aristocracy and can never truly function in a house because:

> The governess in the nineteenth century personified a life of intense misery. She was also that most unfortunate individual; the single, middle-class woman who had to earn her own living. Although being a governess might be a degradation, employing one was a sign of culture and means. . . . The psychological situation of the governess made her position unenviable. Her presence created practical difficulties within the Victorian home because she was neither a servant nor a member of the family. She was from the social level of the family, but the fact that she was paid a salary put her at the economic level of the servant. (Smith 197)

Smith's argument denoting the nineteenth century governess' challenges displays a collapse in Jane's society because there is not clarity in a governess's class. Bronte utilizes society's collapse to show Jane's superiority to both the servants and bourgeois. She is superior to the servants because she possesses marketable skills, education, and wit learned at Lowood, which she was only given because she was displaced from a bourgeois family. On the other hand, her goodness and spirituality elevate her above the haughtiness and incivility of Rochester's

bourgeois friends. Her incongruity displays how the state collapses even in individual estates because there is not clarity in a governess' class.

Furthermore, Mr. Rochester nuances Jane's role because he treats Jane as a confidant even though she is his employee. Both in private and public spheres, he disturbs social order by favoring her. Jane notices her incongruity with the rest of the house in one of their first meetings, stating, "I was thinking sir, that very few masters would trouble themselves to inquire whether or not their paid subordinates were piqued and hurt by their orders" (Bronte 134). He quickly responds, "Paid subordinates! What, you are my paid subordinate are you? Oh yes, I had forgotten the salary!" (135). Wealth affords Mr. Rochester the ability to forget Jane's salary, but she cannot because she operates in the confusing state of between. She craves to please both Mr. Rochester and her fellow employees to gain their favor and friendship. She cannot dismiss Mr. Rochester's affections because if she does not entertain him, he may dispose of her just like any other extraneous commodity. Jane already feels distance between herself and the household not just because of her residence but her access to their master. Now, Rochester's affection and not just his favor distances Jane from the household.

In his intimate conversations with Jane, Rochester does not consider her identity as his employee and love interest. While claiming to forget her position in his treatment of Jane, he insults her by sharply commenting, "Most things free-born will submit to anything for a salary; therefore, keep to yourself, and don't venture on generalities of which you are intensely ignorant" (135). However, Jane is not "intensely ignorant" because of her childhood and education. She came from a wealthy household. Though she was not accepted by Gateshead, she knows the conditions of the Victorian house. Further, by being forced to be a servant in her own home as a child, she closely identifies with the servants at Thornfield. At Lowood School, she

saw the incongruities between a proletarian's work and payment for that work. Rochester's expressions distance Jane from him. Now, due to her new status as Rochester's fiancé, she risks losing herself to his whims and wishes if she does not assert her independence.

Despite Jane's new position as the future Mistress of Thornfield as Rochester's fiancé, she desires to maintain her earned position as a governess in the house. She hopes to "earn [her] keep" and "have ever so small an independency" to preserve her self-created identity (Bronte 6, 274). Because she boldly asserts that she will "earn [her] board and lodging, thirty pounds a year . . . [and] furnish [her] own wardrobe out of that money" by acting as Adele's governess, Jane breaks social expectations and also England's law of coverture (6, 274). Washington explains that England's law of coverture states that "married women could not own property" and "married couples were legally one person and that the husband was the legal representative of that person" which would not allow Jane to earn or retain money for herself (Washington 7).

Similarly, Jane refuses to yield to Rochester's will and expectations of her as a wife. Though Rochester delights in clothing Jane in the dress of the bourgeois, she refuses to submit to standard roles of a Victorian wife by "being dressed like a doll" (Bronte 274). She no longer feels like herself but someone who "did not exist" and "whose garments said to be hers had already displaced [her] black stuff Lowood frock and straw bonnet . . . " (274, 281). When Rochester attempts to mold her into a submissive wife, she exclaims, "I will not be your English Celine Vargas" (275). She recognizes how Rochester's previous mistresses were dismissed because of their dependence on his affluence and assets. In the same conversation, Jane also reminds Rochester that only "[his] regard" is the reason for their marriage so no "debt will be quit" through marriage (275). She refuses to marry out of economic convenience because she

knows capital carries authority. Until she hears about his entire past, Jane still trusts that their marriage will not conform to standard Victorian marriage constructs.

Jane realizes her self-creation has been intruded upon after hearing Rochester's explanation of his affair with Celine and seeing his maltreatment of Bertha. However, it is not until her conversation with Rochester the night before she leaves that she does not "like [Rochester] so well as [she has] sometimes, indeed, sir. Did it not seem to you in the least wrong to live in that way: first with one mistress and then another?" (Bronte 319). In his response, he condemns himself but also clarifies his view on the governess' condition:

> I was with me: and I did not like it. It was a groveling fashion of
> existence: I should never like to return to it. Hiring a mistress is the next
> worse thing to buying a slave: both are often by nature, and always by
> position, inferior: and to live familiarly with inferiors is degrading. I now
> hate the recollection of the time I passed with Celine, Giacinta, and Clara.
> (319*)*

Due to his haughty classification of women who economically submit to him as slaves, Jane decides she can no longer be a part of his life as a socioeconomic inferior. If she marries him while she remains his governess, she will always be his inferior. Moreover, she cannot go against her self-created identity because she

> . . . felt the truth of these words, and [she] drew from them the certain
> inference, that if [she] were so far to forget [herself] and all the teaching
> that had ever been instilled into [her], as - under any pretext - with an
> justification - through any temptation - to become the successor of these
> poor girls, he would one day regard [her] with the same feeling which now

in his mind desecrated their memory. [She] did not give utterance to this

conviction: it was enough to feel it. (319)

After hearing Rochester's terrible revelations, Jane's only option is to flee once she realizes he

has infringed upon her individual, economic identity. Even though Jane tried to create an identity

for herself while still choosing to marry Rochester, without money, she finds she has little

control. She refuses to marry out of economic convenience because she knows capital carries

authority.

Though Jane frees herself from capital's authority at Thornfield, society's constricting

expectations follow Jane as she travels into the countryside and limit her mobility. When Jane

departs, she is not welcomed by any neighboring townspeople due to her confusing economic

station as a well-dressed beggar. As she begs door to door for both shelter and food late at night,

Jane reflects, "an ordinary beggar is frequently an object of suspicion; a well dressed beggar

inevitably so" (Bronte 337). As a result of her liminal role in society as a governess, others view

her as a prostitute because of the confusing state of her dress and station. Since she begs on the

street at night, she does not have an established state. When treated harshly by an older woman

she surmises, "it was not her business to think for me, or to seek a place for me: besides, in her

eyes, how doubtful I must have appeared by character, position, tale" (335). Here, society

implements its guidelines for appropriate womanhood and imposes them upon Jane. Since she

breaks from expectations, she is rejected by society.

When she finds respite with the Rivers at Moor House, she discovers that she can be a

part of a welcoming family. However, she meets distrust from Hannah, a servant who is Jane's

economic equal. Hannah "did not understand [Jane] or [her] circumstances: that she was

prejudiced against [Jane]" (Bronte 347). However, John and his sisters Mary and Diana

conditionally admit Jane into their home because of her dire health. Upon hearing her story and validating it against other 'legitimate' sources, they allow her to temporarily recover at their home. After Jane discovers she, John, Mary, and Diana are relatives, she receives solace through finding a state to live in and a job to become a functioning member of the house.

Because Jane is educated and has worked in a wealthy estate, her cousins disapprove of Jane's desire to work in a village parish. John in particular thinks she is socially superior to the school. He exclaims, "But you comprehend me? . . . It is a village school: your scholars will be only poor girls - cottagers' children - at best, farmer's daughters. . . . What will you do with your accomplishments? What, with the largest portion of your mind - sentiments tastes?" She responds, "Save them till they are wanted. They will keep" (Bronte 365). Jane does not fear social degradation because she does not define herself through her connections in society. To Jane, working in a village school equals teaching an heiress because it is honest work. Earlier, she declares, "I will be a dressmaker: I will be a plain work-woman; I will be a servant, a nurse girl, if I can be no better" because unlike John or others in her position, she does is not beholden to an economic ideal (358).

After seeing Jane's dedication and humility while she teaches, John proposes to Jane and hopes to take her to India with him to serve as a missionary. However, Jane refuses to marry John because a loveless marriage would desecrate her identity. She says, "No, St. John, I will not marry you. I adhere to my resolution . . . because you did not love me; now, I reply, because you almost hate me. If I were to marry you, you would kill me. You are killing me now" (Bronte 424). St. John imposes a threat to Jane's identity. He wants to marry her because her skills are beneficial when working in a new community. Like her time at Lowood, Jane would be valued as a commodity and "an appendage of the machine" with John in India (Marx 71). When Jane's

identity parallels with her production output, she loses her humanity. When her cousin Diane questions Jane's refusal, Jane replies, "far from that, Diana; his sole idea in proposing to me is to procure a fitting fellow-labourer in his Indian toils" (Bronte 427). Refusing to marry John is similar to Jane's flee from Rochester because submitting to either John or Rochester destroys a piece of her self-created identity.

When Jane inherits wealth from her uncle, she has power to assert her independence. John comes to Jane's school while she teaches to inform her that "[her] uncle Mr. Eyre of Madeira, is dead" and that "he has left [Jane] all his property, and [Jane is] now rich" (Bronte 392). When Jane receives this news, for the first time in her life, she belongs to a state and an estate belongs to her. She has the power to enact her will upon others. Furthermore, she can decide whether she enjoys her work and if she wants to continue participating in it. Before, she had to accept her work because it fit her upbringing and it was her only option for livelihood. She could only live off of the kindness of her cousins for a short time. Now, she solely chooses her fate because poverty no longer burdens her.

Instead of keeping her newfound inheritance for herself, Jane divides the money between herself and her cousins. Her Marxist thoughts of bestowing capital on others are a result of her desire for freedom for herself and others which traces throughout the text. With the money, Jane realizes that she "could help them: they were scattered - [Jane] could reunite them - the independence, the affluence which was [hers], might be theirs too" (Bronte 396). Furthermore, she does not just give money to her cousins for their well-being but splits it evenly between all of them because "were we not four? Twenty thousand pounds shared equally, would be five thousand each, - enough to spare: justice would be done, - mutual happiness secured" (396). Here, we see that Bronte not only associates capital with freedom but also happiness. Jane is able

to part from a majority of her inheritance because she has never submitted to capital or allowed it to impose on her identity thus far.

Jane returns to Mr. Rochester as a free, economically independent woman and demonstrates that no person or economic setting can define her because she acts on her own volition. She secures her uncle's inheritance and boldly declares, "I told you I am independent, sir, as well as rich: I am my own mistress" (Bronte 448). In doing so, she transforms herself from being seen as a "kept mistress," "paid inferior," to a self-reliant and independent mistress (Washington 1). As a result of her capital, she can marry Rochester without fear of his monetary hold on her. The concerns she earlier voices about marrying him only for "his regard" no longer matter because she has wealth, which creates an economic identity independent of him (Bronte 275). Unlike her potential marriage to John, "to be [Rochester's] wife is, for me [Jane], to be as happy as I can be on earth" (458). Through inheriting wealth, Jane happily expands her identity to include Rochester because she is now entirely his equal.

These are just some of the many textual examples that support my claim that Jane's lack of capital determined her treatment and growth in the novel. In *Jane Eyre*, we see that real identity comes when an individual has to push against his or her sociological framework. A complete understanding of Jane's independence can only be seen through a Marxist or economic reading of the text. Through Jane, Bronte reveals that if one creates his or her own identity apart from society, it is much stronger. Jane's system is broken, and throughout the novel she fights against the socioeconomic interdependence of Bronte's other characters. Had Jane adapted, she would no longer own her identity. Not only is she a female, but she is also an orphan. Not only does Jane not have a family, but she also does not have an inheritance. Not only does Jane refuse moral degradation, but she also rejects marriage out of economic ease. Anytime an ill-defined

character such as Jane appears in a work of literature, we are forced to look at the society that constricts her.

Tension exists as Jane employs her liminality to aggravate her sociological constraints. It is not until she inherits capital from her long-lost uncle that she can assert her own independence which indicates a fundamental sociological problem in how one creates or maintains his or her identity in a constructed society much less a failed state. Jane transforms as a character and is able to make decisions for herself once bestowed capital from her uncle. Her choice to lead a life free from the burdens capital tried to place on her is the fruition of many of Jane's previous actions. Jane's first "no" to John Reed allowed her to say "no" to Mr. Brocklehurst when he wanted to limit her education, Mr. Rochester when he wanted her to become his mistress, and ultimately John Rivers when he asked for her hand in a loveless marriage. Her refusals allow her to say "yes" to her convictions and in turn, embrace her liminality and earn capital. Though Jane was oppressed by Victorian England's expectations, my study determines that her liminality allows her to transcend her class constrictions.

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Essay

Caleb Punt

Truth, Power, and Social Boundaries: A Foucauldian Reading of the Gospel of Mark

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Many recent studies of both the literary and historical person of Jesus have found him to be a surprisingly inclusive figure for his time period. Working off of the Parable of the Wedding Feast found in the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and Thomas, John Dominic Crossan describes Jesus as forwarding "open commensality," meaning he invited everyone from all sections of the strongly hierarchical Jewish culture to share in his new message concerning the "Kingdom of God" (78). Jesus, for Crossan, aimed for a totally "non-discriminatory society" (78). Marcus Borg finds a Jesus whose ministry was based on a new "politics of compassion" (60). What makes the character of Jesus revolutionary for Borg is his willingness to empathize and interact with even the most destitute and stigmatized people of his cultural setting.

These conceptions of Jesus as a forward-thinking, inclusive character struggle to make sense of some of Jesus's sayings in the Gospel of Mark. The character of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark is known for his secretive and, more problematically, exclusionary language. In Mark, the character of Jesus strictly controls who is permitted to know his true identity as the Son of God. Furthermore, he seems to deliberately obscure his teachings, with the expressed purpose of keeping some people in the dark. Stepping briefly into the theological realm, these passages are

problematic because Jesus seems to be strictly controlling who is allowed access to the saving message he has been sent to bring.[1] Consider Mark 4:11-12. Jesus says, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand." As Bruce Hollenbach notes, "This statement is . . . incredibly harsh; Jesus seems to be trying to keep a certain class of men in ignorance, who otherwise might well have repented and received forgiveness" (312). Obviously, these exclusionary statements pose a significant threat to the inclusive, compassionate conceptions of Jesus that recent scholarship has constructed. How can we conceive of Jesus as a morally admirable character if he intentionally withholds such vital information from certain people? In fact, could there be anything less inclusive and less compassionate than deliberately preventing people from repenting and entering "the kingdom of God"? Ultimately, what is it at stake is the moral character of the figure of Jesus in the Christian literary canon.

Because these secretive/exclusionary statements do not seem to fit within the overall narrative of the Gospels, most solutions to this problem have come from the discipline of historical criticism. Instead of trying to understand these specific passages within the Marcan narrative, scholarship has attempted to show how, when, and why later editors imposed these passages on Jesus's actual teachings. For instance, William Wrede published one of the major studies on the secretive language in Mark. Through an analysis of the redactional[2] history of the Gospels, Wrede suggests that the Messianic Secret was inserted into the text by early Christians attempting to ease the tension between their belief in Jesus's Messianic identity and the non-

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[1] The veracity of these theological claims is irrelevant to a literary study of the character of Jesus in Mark. Within the narrative, the character of Jesus appears to keep people from accessing information the text regards as crucial to spiritual wellbeing. This is a moral issue that must de addressed.

[2] "Redaction" refers to the layers of editing within a text. For instance, many scholars believe parts of Mark were added at a latter date for one reason or another. Redactional scholars attempt to separate these layers.

Messianic nature of his actual ministry. Essentially, early Christians were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, come to preach a salvific message concerning the Kingdom of God. However, the written and oral Jesus tradition available to them at the time did not explicitly proclaim this identity or this mission. To solve for this discrepancy, early Christians wrote a Gospel in which Jesus forbids people from revealing his identity and strictly controls who is able to understand his teachings. This was meant to explain why his identity and mission was not widely known up to this point. However, Wrede's theory, along with numerous other historical theories that followed, has been strongly critiqued from many angles. Historical analyses of this subject are built upon a network of historical assumptions, each of which has numerous scholars on either side. For instance, Wrede's theory relies on Marcan priority, that Mark was the first Gospel written. However, this is far from a universal opinion, with many modern scholars supporting what is known as the Greisbach Hypothesis, which claims that Mark is a later condensed version of Matthew and Luke.[3] A myriad of other such historical questions—authorship, textual dating, etc.—further complicate the historical basis of Wrede's theory (and others like it). No theory has been able to claim even general acceptance because of the complexity of the issue when approached from a purely historical viewpoint.

Furthermore, historical approaches to this problem in a sense dodge the actual issue. In current day, the Christian community uses the canonized version of scripture to construct their practices and beliefs. Historical answers to this problem dismantle the canon and therefore are not acceptable to a strong majority of Christians. What is needed is a method of reconciling these secretive/exclusionary passages with the narrative as it is presented in the common, modern day texts. To fill this need, the issue might be approached from a literary rather than a historical

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[3] See Henaut, Barry W. "Is Q but the Invention of Luke and Mark: Method and Argument in the Griesbach Hypothesis." *Religious Studies And Theology* 8.3 (1988): 15-32. Web. 20 Nov. 2016.

perspective. Using the resources of contemporary literary theory, scholars have shown the potential for a multiplicity of biblical interpretations. In like manner, this essay will take a narratological approach to Mark, analyzing the narrative of this Gospel as it is presented in its contemporary form. I will use the theory of Michel Foucault to first reconcile the exclusionary language of Mark with the conception of Jesus as an inclusive social reformer and then to further flesh out this positive conception of the character of Jesus. In the Gospel of Mark, the character of Jesus resists a Foucauldian conception of power by attempting to create a separate "field of knowledge" from that of the Jewish religious leaders and by actively working against the hierarchical social structures of his culture.

In order to set up a Foucauldian critical framework through which to read Mark, we must first look at the theorist's epistemology. As a writer operating amid the postmodern critique on Enlightenment thinking, Foucault has a healthy suspicion towards claims of absolute, objective knowledge and truth; he has a certain "incredulity towards metanarratives" (Lyotard 356). Postmodern theory has seriously called into question the ability of a person to escape his or her own subjective vantage point in order to access an objective, all-encompassing understanding of absolute reality.[4] Instead, Postmodernism suggests, since humans are subjective, contextual beings, subjective, contextual truth is all we can expect to ascertain.

Foucault acknowledges these competing conceptions of truth, the Enlightenment model and the Postmodern model, in a 1977 interview with Alesandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino. Foucault says, "By truth I do not mean 'the ensembles of truths which are to be discovered and accepted,' but rather 'the ensemble of rules according to which the true and false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true'" ("Truth" 74). Foucault is not interested in

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[4] For examples of the Postmodern critique on Enlightenment thinking and how conceptions of truth have changed, see Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* and Nietzsche's (who was a precursor to postmodernism) *On Truth and Lies in an Extramoral Sense.*

trying to catalog a set of absolute axioms that supposedly exists outside of subjective experience and applies to every situation. This is perhaps an impossible endeavor. Instead, he is interested in discovering why certain societies decide to call some things true and others false. He claims, "Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements" ("Truth" 73). Every society, according to Foucault, creates an "ensemble of rules" that they use in order to divide claims into the categories of "true" and "false." For example, a modern secular society may use empiricism and the scientific method in order to "distinguish true and false statements." In that society, experiments, mathematics, statistics, etc. are used in order to call something "true" or "false." In more thoroughly religious societies, a particular doctrine or sacred tradition may function in an analogous role. It is this contextual, societally constructed conception of truth that interests Foucault.

The first aspect of Foucault's conception of power is a result of postmodern epistemology. An individual can express power by manipulating or affecting the "ensemble of rules" that determines what is deemed "true" in their community. Foucault explains, "'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it" ("Truth" 74). Whoever can control these "systems of power" can, for all intents and purposes, determine what is deemed "true" in the community over which the system of power operates. How are these "systems of power" controlled? Foucault suggests they are controlled through the monopolization of "fields of knowledge" (*Discipline* 550). Foucault writes, "Power produces knowledge . . . power and knowledge directly imply one another . . . there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge" (*Discipline* 550). By constituting an exclusive "field of knowledge" available only to a certain group, certain individuals can take

control of the truth-determining system of power in a community. Power is the result of a field of knowledge available only to a certain group of people.

How can the oppressed people in a community undermine the truth-determining power held by their oppressors? In short: by establishing a new field of knowledge, distinct from that of the powerful. Foucault describes a person called the "specific intellectual"[5] who is able to "constitute a new politics of truth" ("Truth" 73-74). This individual engages in "a battle 'for truth,' or at least 'around truth'" ("Truth" 74)[6] by attempting to create a system of knowledge to which the traditional figures of power do not have access. In doing so, the specific intellectual is able "to detach . . . the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic, and cultural within which it operates at the present time" ("Truth" 75). This essay will argue that the character of Jesus operates as a "specific intellectual" within the Marcan narrative by attempting to create a field of knowledge, a "new symbolic universe" (Rhoads 150), to which the traditional figures of authority do not have access.

Foucault's writings hint at a second aspect of power, the idea that power is not solely concentrated within an individual, or even a group, but is diffused through social structures. Foucault says, "Power is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the 'privilege,' acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions" (*Discipline* 551). In most cases, those in power are not in that position because of any action of their own—they did not seize power—but because preexisting cultural hierarchies have given them a "strategic position." Of the oppressed, Foucault says power "is transmitted by them and through them; it

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[5] The "specific intellectual" works "within specific sectors" and deals with problems that are related to their own specific context, problems that are "nonuniversal" (*Truth* 68). The specific intellectual is contrasted with a "universal intellectual" which Foucault describes as working towards an objective "moral, theoretical, and political" universality (*Truth* 67-68).

[6] Foucault clarifies this statement: "It's a matter not of a battle 'on behalf' of truth, but of a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays" (*Truth* 74).

exerts pressure upon them, just as they themselves . . . resist the grip it has on them" (*Discipline* 550). Power is not a commodity—consciously acquired, traded and expressed—but a result of underlying social forces.

Foucault's theoretical pontifications on this aspect of power can be more clearly seen in the work of Clarissa Rile Hayward, particularly in how she interacts with John Gaventa's ideas in *Power and Powerlessness.* Gaventa summarizes the various ways in which power has been thought about throughout history, describing three dimensions of power. Each "dimension" involves one party, called A, consciously affecting the decision making process of another party, called B, either through direct force, withholding information, or manipulating B's desires. Heyward, however, claims that the categorization of power up to this point has been fundamentally flawed. She suggests that each "dimension" of power (Hayward calls them "faces") assumes that A, and to a certain extent B, are unitary individuals with a clearly defined will that they are either able to express (the powerful) or unable to express (the powerless). Heyward argues for a "de-facing" of power, in which power is not simply thought of as the ability of one group to consciously effect the actions of another, but "[as] the network of social boundaries that delimits, for all, fields of possible action" (Heyward 11). Power, for Heyward, is not solely expressed through the conscious actions of one group but is woven into the fabric of a community that strictly controls social mobility. Its instruments are not just swords, soldiers, guns, and bombs, but also "laws, rules, symbols, norms, customs, social identities, and standards" (Hayward 30).[7] In her response to Gaventa, Heyward interprets Foucault's more ethereal statements on this second aspect of power and illuminates the various ways in which the character of Jesus rebels against this power in the Gospel of Mark. Jesus does not physically

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[7] This interpretation of Heyward's work borrows heavily from my previous paper, "Jesus Christ, Superman." The earlier paper did not discuss how Heyward reacts to Gaventa and previous power theory.

confront a "faced" conception of power—he never comes to a physical confrontation. Instead, through interaction with the marginalized people in first-century Jewish society, the Marcan narrative presents him as able to "act upon, or in ways that effect, the boundaries that constrain and enable social action" (Heyward 31).

Turning towards the text, both historical context and narrative analysis suggest that the first aspect of Foucault's conception of power—as reliant on the cultivation of exclusive fields of knowledge—is at work within the Gospel of Mark. The historical writing of Anthony Saladrini suggests that the Pharisees and other religious authorities in Mark represented a thoroughly educated group of people.[8] These religious rulers were literate, educated in the dominant religion (Judaism), and were able to spend significant amount of their time reading, writing, and teaching. In contrast, Jesus most likely came from a very poor, if not destitute, socio-economic group. Forced to spend the majority of their time maintaining basic subsistence, Jesus and the people to whom he ministered had minimal educational opportunities.[9] The social chasm between the religious leaders and Jesus's followers creates a friction that is reflected in the narrative of Mark. Elizabeth Malbon argues that the literary purpose of the religious leaders is "[to] function as Jesus's opponents" (261) and that "the Jewish religious establishment . . . may clearly be labeled

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[8] An excerpt from "Jesus Christ, Superman" provides additional historical support: "Anthony J. Saladrini uses Lenski's famous theory of social stratification (see Lenski's *Power*) to place the Pharisees within the retainer class, which 'shared in the life of the elite' (Saladrini 41). Saladrini argues that the Pharisees could not have been members of the common people, craftspeople or any other lower class, because ancient sources tell us they served religious, political and educational roles (42). Pharisees used these roles 'to strive for influence and power' and thus could not have spent all of their time producing enough for subsistence, as is required by the lower classes (42). Instead, Pharisees were able to devote time to becoming literate, learning the Jewish law codes, and maintaining the religious systems of the community."

[9] More historical context taken from "Jesus Christ, Superman": "John Dominic Crossan argues in *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, that Jesus was 'a peasant talking to peasants' (65). Jesus lived within the social strata of people who were required to spend all of their available hours working in order to maintain basic subsistence. The people to whom Jesus ministered, Crossan argues, may have been from even lower social groups. Crossan contends that the word most often translated as 'poor' in the Beatitudes would more accurately be rendered as 'destitute' (68). The word 'destitute' refers to the social class below peasants, the beggars. These people are rejected by society as a whole and are not able to work fast enough even to maintain a minimum level of subsistence. Crossan puts it rather vividly when he says these people are 'squeezed out deliberately as human junk from the [cultural] system's own evil operations' (70). Needless to say, these people would not have any educational opportunities."

enemies of the Marcan Jesus" (263-264). The brief historical and literary context provided by Saladrini and Malbon shows that the power dynamic at work between Jesus and the religious authority figures can be thought of in Foucauldian terms. The religious leaders, because they are educated, literate, and economically stable, have control over the community's "field of knowledge"—the Judaic religion. Jesus's socio-economic group, illiterate and destitute, is subjected to this "truth-determining" monopoly on knowledge, setting up the conflict between Jesus and the religious authorities that is pervasive throughout Mark's narrative. In light of this power dynamic and using Foucault as an interpretative tool, we can read the character of Jesus as Foucault's "specific intellectual," attempting to undermine the religious leader's "field of knowledge," to "constitute a new politic of truth," and "to detach . . . the power of truth from the forms of hegemony" (*Truth* 73-74). Jesus does this by creating a new system, or "field" of knowledge, carefully policing who has access to it, and creating a dynamic of "insiders" and "outsiders."

The first chapter of Mark establishes important themes to the reading of the character of Jesus as Foucault's "specific intellectual." Mark establishes the theme of a new "field of knowledge" and begins to separate characters into groups of those who are "in the know" and those who are not. Mark opens by describing the work of a man named John. This man is strongly counter-cultural, he operates in the "wilderness," is clothed "with camel's hair," and eats "locusts and wild honey" (*ESV Study Bible* 1. 4-6). He is proclaiming a new message of "repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (1. 4). It is significant that John emerges from and works within the "wilderness." If the purpose of the Marcan narrative and the character of Jesus is to create a new "field of knowledge," separate and distinct from that of religious authority figures, it is only fitting that this new message should originate far from the center of Jewish religious

authority (the city of Jerusalem). As the first chapter progresses, the message of John (now preached by Jesus) moves out of the wilderness and into the center of Jewish religious life.[10] This movement represents the challenge of a new field of knowledge to the status quo.

This new field of knowledge, which seems to be characterized by a call to repentance and the coming of the "kingdom of God" (1. 15), also has a unique way of marking its adherents. All those who accept John's new teaching "[went] out to him and were being baptized by him in the river of Jordan" (1. 5). Baptism serves as a marker to show who has accepted the new teaching and who has not, separating people according to how they respond to John's new paradigm. Jesus himself received this marker, though in a significantly different manner. Jesus does not receive John's basic baptism; while he is being baptized, the heavens are "torn open" and the "Spirit descend[s] on him like a dove" (1. 10). A voice from heaven declares, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (1. 11). Within the Marcan narrative, Jesus's baptism not only serves to mark him as an "insider," but its unique nature suggests that he is the new leader, the new proponent of this rival "field of knowledge." He is the character that will attempt to create a new understanding of the world within the established power structure of the religious leaders. As the new leader, Jesus immediately continues the practice of creating a separate group of "insiders." Directly after his baptism, Jesus calls his first disciples, who "immediately leave their nets" and follow Jesus (1. 18). The first chapter of Mark then lays the foundation for an interpretation of Jesus as Foucault's "specific intellectual" by, first, introducing a new "field of knowledge" (John's call for repentance and the coming kingdom of God); second, separating those who will have access to the field of knowledge from those who will not (John's baptisms and Jesus's calling of the disciples); and third, establishing Jesus as the central figure who will take this new field of knowledge from the "wilderness" (in verse four) to the center of the

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[10] Jesus enters Galilee in verse fourteen and is already preaching in the synagogues by verse twenty-two.

established power-knowledge structures (Galilee in verse fourteen and the synagogues in verse twenty-three).

Moving outward, the overarching narrative of Mark reflects these themes and can be read as the character of Jesus's slow revelation of a new understanding of the world and society—a new field of knowledge—in the midst of an established cultural structure that resists this revelation. Jesus comes from the wilderness preaching a new message of repentance and the coming "kingdom of God" (Mark 1. 15). He takes this message into the centers of cultural authority, Jewish synagogues, and expresses the power and authority behind his message by miraculously healing people the dominant culture has marginalized (Mark 1-2). As his preaching spreads, he is met with resistance by the Jewish religious authority figures, who claim his new message is blasphemous (2. 6-8) and contradictory to established cultural views (2. 23-25). In response to these challenges, Jesus claims his new message has authority both over the established religious understanding (2. 10: "the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins") and the cultural codes supported by that understanding (2. 28: "The Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath"). Jesus, through preaching to large crowds, further reveals his new message and significantly increases his following (3-5, 8-9). When his message has been fully expressed and his following has reached its height, Jesus triumphantly enters Jerusalem, the center of the established religious tradition, and cleanses the Temple, the symbol of religious authority (11). In response, the established tradition has Christ killed (15. 21-41), but Jesus's message is shown to be triumphant when he rises from the dead (16).

The concept of Jesus as Foucault's "specific intellectual," hinted at in chapter one and reflected in the overarching narrative of Mark's Gospel, allows for a novel interpretation of some of Jesus's exclusionary teaching methods. The most explicit example of this exclusionary

language is found in The Parable of the Sower (Mark 4). Speaking in front of "a very large crowd," Jesus tells an ambiguous parable about a sower sowing his seeds on a path, rocky ground, thorns, and good soil (1. 1, 4-8). Afterwards, Jesus privately explains to his disciples that this parable concerns "the secret to the kingdom of God" (1. 11). He then gives his disciples a detailed explanation of the parable and tells them, "To you has been given the secret to the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand" (4. 11-12). Apparently, Jesus uses parables with the explicit purpose of letting only a select few in on "the secret of the kingdom of God" (1. 11).

Why use these parables, which hide and distort meaning rather than communicate it? Why doesn't Jesus teach in the long discursive methods found in other Gospels, like the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew or the Sermon on the Plain in Luke, so that all may learn "the secret to the Kingdom of God"? Dismantling the term "parable" provides scholars a clue. J. Hillis Miller writes: "'Para' is a . . . double antithetical prefix signifying at once proximity and distance . . . interiority, and exteriority. . . . Something in 'para' is, moreover, not only simultaneously on both sides of the boundary line between 'inside' and 'outside,' it also is the boundary itself . . . a permeable membrane connecting inside and outside" (441). As a "specific intellectual," Jesus is tasked with constructing a separate field of knowledge, to "constitute a new politics of truth" ("Truth" 74), separate from the status quo. He uses *para*bles as Miller's "permeable membrane," a way of controlling who has access to the new field of knowledge. The parable is the membrane itself, allowing for a division between those in the know and those on the outside. Jesus continues in the next few chapters to tell more parables hinting at "the kingdom of God"—the Parable of the Seed Growing and the Parable of the Mustard Seed—and again the text tells us

that "He did not speak to [the crowd] without a parable, but privately, to his own disciples he explained everything" (4. 34). "The kingdom of God" appears to be a new system of knowledge that Jesus is creating in order to challenge the established knowledge monopoly held by the religious leaders. These parables are meant to reveal this new form of knowledge, but progressively, and only to those within Jesus's coterie, the poorest socio-economic class. By being purposely selective, Jesus creates a system of knowledge to which the dominant, educated class does not have access. In Foucauldian terms, this weakens the religious leaders ability to determine what is "true" within the context of Mark.

In a modern evangelical context, these passages have been difficult to accept because Jesus seems to withhold potentially salvific knowledge from certain people. However, the rest of Christian tradition should discourage us from reading these statements in that manner. Mark ends with the command to "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole of creation" (16. 15). The same command is found in Matthew. The seemingly exclusionary teachings in Mark should not be read as a vindictive attempt to keep the knowledge of salvation from certain people, but a necessary, time-specific strategy to build a rival field of knowledge to the established tradition, thereby empowering a destitute, illiterate, and uneducated social class.

The Messianic Secret also fits this interpretation.[11] The Messianic Secret refers to Jesus's somewhat strange jealousy over his true identity as the Son of God.[12] On numerous occasions throughout Mark, Jesus commands that someone keep his identity a secret.[13] Demons correctly identify Jesus on a number of occasions, and Jesus usually demands their silence. Jesus gives the same directive to the people he heals. However, Jesus allows for his identity to be known within

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[11] This interpretation of the Messianic Secret borrows heavily from my earlier paper.
[12] I am not making a definitive claim about the divinity of Jesus. I simply mean that this is his "true" identity within the narrative of Mark.
[13] See Mark 3:11-12, 5:43, 7:36, 8:30, 9:9.

a smaller group of his followers. After witnessing the wonders of Jesus's ministry, Peter is able to correctly identify Jesus as the Christ (Mark 8:29). By selectively determining who is permitted to know and proclaim his true identity, Jesus strengthens the rival system of knowledge that he has created to counter that of the educated social classes, fulfilling his role as the "specific intellectual."

The one time Jesus relaxes his strict demands of secrecy might give further credence to this interpretation. In Mark chapter five, Jesus "came to the other side of the sea [of Galilee]" and cast out the demon Legion (5:1). After this show of spiritual power, Jesus tells the healed demoniac to "go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you" (5:19). This is the opposite directive given to almost every other person whom Jesus helps, but the slackened security makes sense in light of where the miracle took place. Jesus was across the Sea of Galilee in the "non-kosher" territory of Geresa (Neyrey 108). This area is much less Semitic than the majority of the places in the Gospel of Mark. If the purpose of secrecy in Mark is to build a separate field of knowledge from that of the Jewish religious leaders, then it makes sense that the secrecy is slackened in a Gentile region that is not under the direct influence of the Jewish religious groups. When Jesus crosses back to the predominantly Jewish side of the Sea of Galilee in the next section, the shields immediately go back up. In Mark 5:21-43, Jesus heals the ruler's daughter and "strictly charged them that no one should know of this."

A slight adaption of an article by Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll reveals one more way the character of Jesus and Mark's narrative as a whole creates a rival system of knowledge through parabolic language and secrecy. Ahearne-Kroll performs a reader-response interpretation of the secrecy motif in Mark. He observes that not only are the characters within the narrative separated into "insiders" and "outsiders," but the audience also sometimes finds itself on the outside

looking in (717). The Parable of the Seed Growing and the Parable of the Mustard Seed are good examples. These parables are highly ambiguous, but the text does not include an explanation for the reader as in the case of the Parable of the Sower. Instead it simply says, "Privately to his disciples, he explained everything" (4. 34). While Jesus does give an explanation to his disciples, the reader is not privy to it, making the reader an "outsider." Ahearne-Kroll further notes that Mark often refers to the "fulfillment of scripture" without attaching any reference to which part of scripture is being fulfilled (728). While Mark 1:2 explicitly says John came in order to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah, later references to the "fulfillment of scripture" do not include these explanations. Ahearne-Kroll observes that, once again, the audience is left at least partly in the dark.

Ahearne-Kroll's interpretation of Mark using reader-response theory, while interesting, is incomplete. Ahearne-Kroll suggests that the narrative of Mark excludes the audience in certain instances in order to foster a desire to follow Jesus, or the Jesus movement, in their own lives, "to maximize audience/reader participation" (734), and "to motivate the audience to become true insiders by attaching themselves to Jesus and seeking after the kingdom of God manifest in him" (717). Ahearne-Kroll sees audience inclusion and exclusion in Mark as way of winning more disciples to the emerging religion. However, based on Ahearne-Kroll's article, it seems as though audience inclusion/exclusion can be read not only as a call to physical action, literally "leaving nets" (1. 18) to join the new movement, but a call for creative interpretation of Jesus's teachings and ministry. By including ambiguous parables like that of the Seed Growing and the Mustard Seed, and denying the audience a direct interpretation, the Marcan text encourages the audience to creatively find meaning in these passages, to find connections between Jesus's ambiguous teachings and their own religious tradition. This is even clearer in the instances where Jesus

alludes to "the fulfillment of scripture" but does not refer to which part of scripture is being fulfilled. The ambiguity forces the audience to do some creative intellectual work of their own, to read Jesus's teachings back into the established religious tradition.

This expansion of Ahearne-Kroll's thesis fits well into an interpretation of Jesus and Mark as an attempt to create a new "field of knowledge." Essentially, Jesus and the Marcan narrator are involving the audience in their attempt to carve out a system of knowledge separate from that of the religious leaders. The ambiguity created by the alternating inclusion and exclusion of the audience encourages the audience to build on Jesus's new, often-vague teachings, to create from them a larger, more expansive "symbolic universe" (Rhoads 150) with which to challenge the established field of knowledge.

The reading of Jesus as Foucault's "specific intellectual" has hopefully reconciled the secretive and exclusionary language found in Mark with the conception of the character Jesus as an inclusive, morally admirable figure. The purpose of this language is not to deny certain people salvific information but to undermine the dominant "field of knowledge" held by the established religious authorities. Reading Jesus in light of the second aspect of Foucauldian power,[14] as diffused through and upheld by social structures and norms, further solidifies the character of Jesus's role as defender of the marginalized, oppressed, and destitute. The character of Jesus undermines oppressive social norms by actively fighting against the intense purity culture of first-century Judaism.

Again some brief historical background is necessary.[15] Recently, many historical scholars have analyzed the pervasive theme of purity and impurity in the culture in which Jesus would

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[14] Interpreted through Heyward's response to Gaventa.
[15] The discussion on Jewish purity culture is adapted from my earlier paper "Jesus Christ, Superman."

have ministered.[16] Both Borg and Neyrey suggest that, in the first century, the dominant Jewish culture took as their primary paradigm the Levitical refrain, "Be Holy as God is Holy"[17] (Borg 49, Neyrey 91). This resulted in an extreme purity culture that divided everything from places to people on the basis of holiness and uncleanliness. Neyrey refers to a system[18] of ranking the people of first-century Judea according to various degrees of holiness (95). Unsurprisingly, religious groups like the priests and Levites rank at the top of the list, and marginalized groups such as bastards and cripples are at the bottom (95-96). The key to understanding this map is realizing that, in this culture, "holiness means wholeness" (Neyrey 96). Therefore, the sick and maimed are at the bottom of the list because their lack of wholeness signified a corresponding lack of holiness.

Another important aspect of this cultural structure was the idea of being clean and unclean.[19] Being "clean" was a necessary prerequisite for living and operating normally within the Jewish community of the time. One could become "unclean" in a variety of ways. Women who menstruated were unclean, as well as anyone who came into contact with them. Anyone with visible diseases was considered unclean. Consuming certain foods, giving birth, touching a dead body; all these things made a person "unclean" according to traditional Jewish religious code. An unclean person could not operate as a full member of Jewish society; they were kept from participating in festivals, certain meals, and other religious activities. Most ritual uncleanliness was unavoidable, and was not considered sinful. To restore cleanliness, a person simply had to "do ritual washings, endure a waiting period, and/or make an offering to God" (Rhoads 159).

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[16] Borg *Meeting Jesus again for the First Time*, Crossan *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* and *Jesus: a Revolutionary Biography*, Neyrey "The Idea of Purity in Mark's Gospel."
[17] Leviticus 11:44, 20:26
[18] This system is found in the Jewish *Megillah* (Neyrey 95).
[19] Discussion of clean vs. unclean comes from Rhoads, pp. 159-160.

Rhoads notes that the purpose of this purity culture and the accompanying strict standards for ritual cleanliness was "to preserve the nation [of Israel] from the loss of identity and the threat of assimilation" (157). And it must be acknowledged that this strategy did its job, preserving a minority culture from absorption into dominant people groups that ruled over Israel (Rhoads 163). However, these cultural structures also systematically marginalized, oppressed, and stigmatized certain groups of people while elevating others to privileged roles. Someone born with a physical deformity or from an illegitimate marriage was forever thought of as lacking "wholeness" (and therefore "holiness"). Anyone with a chronic illness was forever "unclean," unable to perform enough cleansing rituals to be accepted back into the religious community. This resulted in a large class of sick, poor, and stigmatized people completely ignored by mainstream culture and another educated class, tasked simply with maintaining and enforcing the purity code, rather than being subjected to it.

In Heyward/Foucauldian terms, the purity culture of first-century Judaism represents the diffusion of power through the social structures of society. In this situation, there is not a military force elevating one group while oppressing another; power, in this context does not have a "face."[20] Instead, "the network of social boundaries," constructed by the "laws, rules, symbols, norms [and] customs" of the culture, assign individuals certain places in the society (Heyward 11, 30). A close reading of certain passages in Mark shows how the character of Jesus is able "to act upon, or in ways that effect, the boundaries that constrain and enable social action" (Heyward 31).

Two stories in Mark clearly illustrate that the character of Jesus has both the will and the power to fight against the stigmatizing social structures that pervade the narrative. In the first

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[20] While one could argue the Roman government could constitute a "faced" military power, this paper is dealing with the internal power dynamics of the Jewish community.

chapter, Jesus is approached by a man with leprosy: "And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, 'If you will, you can make me clean'" (1. 40). Notice the leper asks specifically for cleanliness, rather than the restoration of physical health. Contracting leprosy made the man culturally unclean, meaning that he had been unable to participate fully in Jewish life since he had contracted the disease. In the next verse, "[Jesus] stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him '. . . Be clean" (1. 41). By touching the leper, Jesus has rejected the standards of the purity culture and invited the man back into society. Furthermore, touching the leper should have made Jesus unclean. By noting that, instead, the leper was made clean, the narrative implies that Jesus has power over the societal forces that put the man into his desperate position. Jesus's power over social structures is more explicitly illustrated when he unintentionally heals a bleeding woman. This woman "had had a discharge of blood for twelve years" (5. 25). As a result, she had been forced to the margins of society for over a decade. In a desperate attempt for healing, she resolves to touch Jesus's robe, confident it will make her well. Again, if the woman touches Jesus, it should make him unclean, rather than restore her to cleanliness. But again the narrative tells us that as soon as she touches Jesus she is healed, and therefore made ritually clean. In this instance, Jesus does not even intentionally heal the woman, and this unintentionality has the effect of emphasizing the character of Jesus's absolute authority over stigmatizing social structures.

These stories traditionally thought of as tales of miraculous healing could instead be thought of as stories of miraculous cleansing. In the story of the leper, while the text does tell us the man's "leprosy left him" (1. 42), the story obviously deals with cleanliness over health: the man asks to be clean, Jesus declares him clean, and he is immediately sent to the priest to prove his cultural cleanliness. In the second story, the narrative structure emphasizes Jesus's power

over social cleanliness rules by presenting him as a transcendent "clean person/object." Jewish purity culture recognized only "unclean persons/objects," which required ritual cleansing if someone came into contact with them. By emphasizing Jesus's unintentional healing of the bleeding woman, the narrative presents Jesus as the only "clean person/object" in the culture that can make someone clean purely through contact with him. The point of these stories is not simply to describe Jesus's healing power, but to illustrate his willingness to reach out to the outsider and his authority to do so efficaciously.

A more general survey of the Marcan text also illustrates the character of Jesus's desire and power to overcome the "network of social boundaries" created by the dominant religious culture (Heyward 11). The list of individuals at the bottom of Neyrey's Jewish purity map—demoniacs, menstruating women, the blind, the lame, tax collectors, and prostitutes—reads like a Who's Who of the people with whom Jesus interacts. Jesus's first act of ministry is to heal a man with an unclean spirit (1. 21-28). He calls a tax collector to be one of his most intimate disciples (2. 13-14); he even holds the hand of a corpse (5. 41). Throughout the Gospel of Mark, the character of Jesus is constantly in contact with the lame, the blind, the deaf, and the possessed—all people ranking near the bottom of Jewish purity maps. By flaunting the purity culture so obviously, the character Jesus is attempting to fight against the faceless power of the dominant social structure, to "act upon, or in ways that affect, the boundaries that constrain and enable social action" (Heyward 31).

This essay has attempted to do two things: first, to reconcile the secretive and exclusionary language in Mark with the conception of Christ as an inclusive and morally admirable figure; and second, to further build upon this conception by analyzing the character of Jesus's interaction with the marginalized people in Jewish culture. The resulting argument could

have implications for a variety of fields including theology and homiletics, as well as literary analysis. Theologically, the reading of the character of Jesus as Foucault's specific intellectual, intentionally withholding information as a temporary strategy to undermine established bastions of power-knowledge, keeps the exclusionary language in Mark from becoming a hindrance to inclusive conceptions of soteriology.[21] The purpose of this language is not to permanently keep people from accepting Christ's message and receiving eternal life but to serve a specific function within the power structures of the Marcan narrative. This reading may allow pastors to preach these texts as a part of the character of Jesus's unwavering dedication to the downtrodden and marginalized, rather than as justifications for exclusion. Literarily, the Foucauldian tool used to interpret these aspects of the Marcan narrative could be used to further elucidate the power dynamics in a wide array of literary sources. How does Prospero manipulate access to knowledge in order to maintain complete control over the plot of *The Tempest*? How does the absolute control of knowledge reinforce the complete power of the government in Orwell's *1984*? Themes of power, knowledge, and truth pervade the literary canon, and Foucault's unique theories concerning the relationship between these concepts can be used in a variety of contexts.

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[21] Soteriology refers to the Christian doctrine of salvation.

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Essay

Margaret Schultz

"Good Fetch'd Out of Evil": A Comparison of Indian Captivity Narratives

Marching through the forest, the man stumbles. He struggles to stand up again, for his frostbitten feet are like clubs, clumsy and numb. He slips on the ice as he struggles to get up, but his emaciated body cannot find the energy to stand. It has been many days since he has eaten, and his body can hardly take any more stress before it collapses. He is keenly aware of the danger he faces if he cannot keep marching, for his captors have threatened him with their guns and hatchets many times before. The man tries to get up again, but his body no longer responds to his will; it has been pushed too far. His captors mark that he has ceased to follow them and turn back to retrieve their captive. They threaten with the hatchet, telling him they will bash out his brains and scalp him if he does not stand and walk. He replies that there is nothing more he can do. Somehow, with the help of a kind-hearted Indian and Frenchmen, he survives. Once he reaches Canada, he is "redeemed," or bought out of captivity from the Indians by a Frenchman, and sent home in 1678 (Haefeli and Sweeney, *Captive Histories* 36). When he reaches home safely, the man records what he endured.

This is the story of Quintin Stockwell, a man who was captured on September 19, 1677, in the Indian raid on Deerfield, Massachusetts. His narrative was printed by the well-known Massachusetts Puritan reverend, Increase Mather, as an example of God's saving intervention in the lives of New England colonists (Haefeli and Sweeney, *Captive Histories* 36). Though the story of Stockwell's sufferings deterred his family from returning to Deerfield, it did not prevent the resettling of the outpost, and the 1677 raid on Deerfield proved to be one of many to come.

Refusing to retreat from the dangerous frontier, the Puritan colonists resettled Deerfield not long after Stockwell's return. They rebuilt the village, successfully bringing the population to two hundred and ninety-one by 1704, despite suffering at least seven attacks during that twenty-seven-year period (Sheldon 328; Puglisi 103-104; Melvoin 220; Haefeli and Sweeney, *Captive Histories* 3).

On the morning of February 29, 1704, Deerfield Reverend John Williams awakened early in the morning to discover Indians outside of his home. He got out his gun, but when the Indians entered, it misfired. The Indians removed Williams and his family from their home and swiftly killed two of their young children and their slave woman. Promptly the Indians marched the Williams family into the woods, while setting fire to their home. Williams soon discovered that the Indians had captured over one hundred townspeople and killed over forty. While the Indians were preparing the residents of Deerfield to begin their march to Canada, the English, "beat out a company, that remained in the town, and pursued them to the river, killing and wounding many of them" (Williams 11). Hoping to avoid the English, the Indians set a fast walking pace for the party. As they marched, if any of the Deerfield captives were unable to keep up the pace, they were knocked over the head with a hatchet and killed to prevent any delay. Williams' wife died in this manner, as did eighteen others. There were instances when he thought he, too, would be killed for his inability to keep up, but he was spared by the grace of God, as he later wrote in his account. Eventually the Indians forced Williams to march through snow and ice, causing him great pain. Once the party reached Canada, the governor redeemed Williams, and cared for him as the French awaited a captive trade agreement with the English. During this time many of the other Deerfield captives were also redeemed from the Indians. Eventually in November, 1706, Williams returned to Massachusetts (Williams).

Stockwell's and Williams' narratives share many similar themes and events, and there are instances when a passage from one could easily be confused with a passage from the other. Both were captured from Deerfield, both narratives take place on the same march to Canada, both recount similar experiences, and both Williams and Stockwell published their stories with the aid of the highly influential Mather family. Despite these similarities, the tales met entirely different receptions from the Puritan public. During the years after Williams published his narrative, the "book received considerable popularity with the English colonists," and is still one of the most well-known captivity narratives today (University Microfilms; Haefeli and Sweeney, "Recurrent Seller" 341-142). Stockwell's narrative, however, published in a collection of miraculous tales, was not as popular. Scholars Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney write that "Few other editors and printers brought out versions of Stockwell's narrative, which has not received the same level of attention as other New England captivity narratives" (Haefeli and Sweeney *Captive Histories* 37-38).

If these narratives share so many characteristics, why did that of Williams gain such popularity while Stockwell's did not? I argue that Williams' narrative had wide readership while Stockwell's did not because Williams focused on prevalent subjects of his time and culture as a Puritan in colonial Massachusetts and was promoted through his powerful familial connections. Stockwell's story was not of great interest to the public because he focused mostly on recounting the events of his adventure, without incorporating popular Puritan religious ideologies, and he lacked any network of influential family or friends for promotion. Topics that Williams covered that made his narrative popular included dehumanizing the Indians, reinforcing Puritan femininity, and justification of strong anti-Catholic sentiments.

When the British colonists began settling New England, they faced the problem that the land they wished to settle was already inhabited by Indians. By the seventeenth century, a tradition of Indians taking European captives as a means of fighting back against the invasion was well-established. Many former captives recorded what befell them in short narratives, a practice that soon developed into a genre. The first full-length New England Indian captivity narrative, *The Sovereignty & Goodness of God*, was published in 1682 by Mary Rowlandson. Between 1682 and the beginning of the twentieth century, thousands of Indian captivity narratives were written. Such narratives contained accounts of people's experiences while living in captivity with American Indian tribes (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier xi). Scholars of the captivity narrative, Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Arthur Levernier, write that "Some critics believe that the Indian captivity narrative functions as *the* archetype of American culture, or its foundation text, in which initial contact between Europeans and Native Americans inevitably evolved into conflict and finally colonial conquest" (*Women's Indian Captivity Narratives* xi). They also argue that the early Indian captivity narratives served as a means of informing the oblivious Europeans about Indian cultures. However, "In general," they write, "the narratives in these works projected stereotypes that conveniently supported the political aims of the European country that published them" (*Women's Indian Captivity Narratives* xi). Scholar R. W. G. Vail suggests that, "our American ancestors [Puritans] did not believe in play-acting or in the corrupting influence of the novel, so they limited themselves to true tales of horror in the form of deathbed confessions, stories of shipwreck, piracy, plague, and disaster, and of Indian captivity and torture" (24). Put simply, Vail argues that the Puritans did not believe that dramatic fiction was morally edifying and thus preferred true dramatic tales. In this view, Indian captivity narratives served as a popular source of acceptable dramatized entertainment. Most Puritan

narratives, such as those of Rowlandson and Reverend Williams, also promoted Puritan ideals, such a "uphold[ing] the sovereignty of God," maintaining a rational, God-centered community, promoting the "reformed" theology of Calvin, and fighting off the desires of the flesh (Hall, "Introduction" xxi-xxiii). Thus, when Williams' narrative grew popular and Stockwell's did not, it was because Williams promoted the Puritan values, both defining and fulfilling the Indian captivity narrative genre.

The first key difference between the narrative of Reverend John Williams and that of Quintin Stockwell is their literary treatment of their Indian captors. Stockwell depicts the Indians as human, while Williams depicts them as savages. This can first be seen in the words the two men use to describe their captors. Williams occasionally uses the words "savage," "barbarous," and "heathen" to describe his captors, while Stockwell never uses these words, and instead calls them "Indians." The effect of these subtle choices of words is that Stockwell humanizes the Indians who captured him while Williams dehumanizes them. This sort of characterization remains fairly consistent throughout both narratives. In one instance, Williams demonstrates the barbarism of his captors with a story of how his master responded when Williams refused to cross himself when commanded to, "he threw down his hatchet, saying he would first bite off all my nails if I still refused. . . . he set his teeth in my thumb nail, and gave a gripe with his teeth" (Williams 31). Readers of Williams' narrative would easily recognize that the Indian biting Williams' fingers as the actions of uncivilized savages, which supported the Puritans' presupposed ideas about the Indians. Many scholars have confirmed this interpretation of Williams' portrayal of the Indians, saying that he, "refuses to acknowledge his Indian captors capable of even the most rudimentary acts of human kindness" (Derounian-Stodola and

Levernier, *The Indian Captivity Narrative* 62). Williams' use of these images helped his

narrative gain popularity in Puritan New England.

This image of Indians as Catholic heathens serves as a strong example of Puritan attitudes

towards Indians. The Puritans believed that their way of living provided a good, well-ordered,

and Godly lifestyle (C. Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* 479-480). These morally upright

Puritans wanted an undoubtedly evil force against which they were clearly pitted, to provide an

evil contrast to their goodness, and they chose the Indians, who they demonized (Haefeli and

Sweeney, "Revisiting the Redeemed Captive" 4). Scholars Derounian-Stodola and Levernier

argue that the prominent Puritan view of Indians was that of complete spiritual depravity. "In

New England," they write, "where Puritans and Pilgrims hoped to establish a theocracy where

the forces of good would combat the powers of evil, and image of the Indian prevailed that

associated Indian culture with the devil" (*The Indian Captivity Narrative* 61). This view can be

seen in the writings of the time. The influential and powerful Puritan minister Cotton Mather

described the Indians' conflict with the Puritans as the holy, Protestant, European agents of God

against the demonic, savage agents of the Devil. He wrote,

> Two colonies of churches being *brought forth*, and a third *conceived* within the
>
> bounds of *New-England*, by the year 1636. it [*sic*] was time for the *devil* to take
>
> the *alarum* [*sic*], and make some attempt in opposition to the *possesion* [*sic*]
>
> which the Lord Jesus Christ was going to have of these *utmost parts of the earth*.
>
> These *parts* were then covered with nations of barbarous *indians* and infidels, in
>
> whom the *prince of the power of the air* [22] did *work as a spirit*; nor could it be
>
> expected that nations of wretches, whose whole *religions* was [*sic*] the most

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[22] The "prince of the power of the air" meaning the devil, see: Eph. 2:2 (KJV).

explicit sort of *devil-worship*, should not be acted by the devil to engage in some

early and bloody action, for the extinction of a plantation so contrary to his

interests, as that of *New-England* was. (*Magnalia Christi Americana* 479-480)

Mather clearly demonstrated that he viewed the Indians as agents of the devil, in direct conflict

with the goals of God for the Puritan people and their colonies in New England. According to

Mather, the Indians were intent upon doing the work of the devil by destroying God's work in

New England.

Stockwell's narrative, however, portrayed the Indians as capable of both cruelty and

gentleness. According to scholars, Stockwell was, "more understanding and less hostile" towards

the Indians than many of his fellow captivity-narrative authors (Haefeli and Sweeney, *Captive

Histories* 37). He indicated in his narrative that he understood some of their language and at

other times described them as generous and "very kind," especially when they saved his life

(Stockwell 44; 42; 52-53). Despite these potentially positive views, Stockwell did acknowledge

that the Indians were "very cruel" to him, telling how they punished him for trying to hoard food,

"and [they] gave me *Raccoon Grease* to drink, which made me sick and Vomit" (48; 49). While

Stockwell did at times depict the cruelty of the Indians, he did not view them as universally cruel

and heathen in the way that Williams did. This did not fit with the general Puritan demonic view

of Indians. Williams' treatment of the Indians aligned with the popular Puritan view, and his

narrative could easily be used as further support of the pre-existing hatred the Puritans had for

Indians. Because Stockwell portrayed the Indians as less heathen than Williams, and thus did not

wholeheartedly support the prevalent view, his narrative did not gain popularity the way

Williams' did.

The second important difference between the narratives of Williams and Stockwell is their literary treatment of women. Both men mention fellow captive women in their narratives, but Williams' women dramatize and reinforce the Puritan and frontier ideals for women while Stockwell's woman fails to promote these ideologies. According to Puritan minister Samuel Willard, women were the "*weaker Vessel*" in body and mind (610-611). However, the Puritans "recognized that women had distinctive spiritual capacities" and praised women for their piety in submitting to God (Hall, "The Good Society" 163). While Puritan women were supposed to be subject to their husbands, they did have "A *joint interest in governing the rest of the Family*" (Morgan 45; Willard 610). Such joint interest did give Puritan women a place of equality with their husbands, but only in context of the family in relation to children and servants (Morgan 45). Another important detail to recall is that Puritan women were also frontier women. In her work on frontier women in captivity, Dawn Laner Gherman writes, "Victimization and martyrdom are the bone and muscle of every statue, picture and word portrait of a frontier woman" (3). Both the Puritan expectations for women and general European frontiersmen's expectations for women are significant to an examination of the captivity narratives written by Williams and Stockwell.

Williams depicted numerous women in his narrative, and when examined together, it is clear that his women fulfilled the Puritan and frontier versions of femininity. Williams quickly established that women were weaker, as he explained that the Indians killed many women as they travelled with statements such as, "They killed this day two women, who were so faint they could not travel" (Williams 18). In fact, of the eighteen people killed in the march, only one was male[23] (Williams 13). After he painted the women in his narrative as physically weak, Williams

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[23] The male was a slave who was murdered when the Indians were drunk, but "Natives and African Americans did not always get along very well," thus the fact that a male was killed was

moved on to tell how the women drew spiritual strength from their weakness, using a young woman named Mary Brooks as an example. Williams wrote that Mary came to him and said, "I am not able to travel far; I know they will kill me to-day; but (says she) God has (praised be his name) by his spirit with his word, strengthened me to my last encounter with death. . . . And (says she) I am not afraid of death; I can, through the grace of God, chearfully [*sic*] submit to the will of God" (18-19). Mary demonstrated her submission to the will of God and also showed herself to be at peace with her impending death because she trusted God. By this demonstration, Mary Brooks was an ideal Puritan woman, strong in her faith and submissive to God. Williams continued to reinforce Puritan expectations for women when he wrote of his wife, Eunice, when she spoke to him just before she died. As she died, Eunice Williams emphasized her role as mother, "she hoped God would preserve my life, and the life of some, if not of all of our children, with us; and commended to me, under God, the care of them" (13). Eunice's concern for her children demonstrated that she embodied a good Puritan woman as a good wife and mother, concerned less with her own safety than that of her husband and offspring.

Finally, not only did Williams depict women in his book as ideal Puritan women but also as ideal frontier women. He did this by making the women clear victims to the Indians, especially as they died, as he did with Eunice Williams and Mary Brooks, and by portraying the women as martyrs. This was accomplished when he described a young woman from his town who was taken to a French nunnery, "They pinched her arms till they were black and blue; and made her go into their church; and because she would not cross herself, struck her several blows with their hands on her face" (Williams 58). This young woman was punished brutally for refusing to participate in any Catholic rituals, and by choosing to tell her story, Williams

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an issue of race and is of little significance to a study of gender (Haefeli and Sweeney, *Captors and Captives* 126).

portrayed her as a martyr for the Protestant cause in a Catholic, heathen frontier. Through these examples, it is clear that Williams' narrative served as a justification of the idealized Puritan and frontierswoman images of his time.

Quintin Stockwell does not accomplish this reinforcement of Puritan and frontier womanhood nearly as effectively in his narrative. Stockwell mentioned three women in his narrative, but two are only mentioned in passing. The third woman is a fellow captive, who does fulfill at least part of the frontierswoman ideal. Stockwell explained that the Indians threatened to burn them at the stake, "Here they had a great Dance (as they call it) and concluded to burn three of us, and had got Barck [*sic*] to do it with, and as I understood afterwards, I was one that was to be burnt. Sergeant *Plimpton* an other, and *Benjamin Wait* his Wife the third" (44). This woman is in danger of being burned at the stake, which makes her a victim. However, no mention of any religious sentiment is made. Thus, she is no martyr. Even if it were not a religious martyrdom, there is no greater purpose for her possible upcoming death mentioned in the text of Stockwell's narrative. Thus, while Stockwell had an opportunity to make an example of the ideal Puritan frontierswoman in his narrative as Williams did, he did not seize it, and the opportunity was wasted. Because Williams promoted the popular Puritan and frontierswoman images in his narrative, his readers approved of what they read and it grew in popularity. However, Stockwell only partially promoted the image of a frontierswoman, which caused readers to glance over his narrative, as it did not have any special meaning to them.

The third crucial factor in popularity of Puritan captivity narratives is the promotion of anti-Catholic sentiments. The Puritans were staunchly anti-Catholic, and any excuse to further hate Catholics was embraced in New England. This can be seen in the writings of the time, for example, Puritan minister Cotton Mather wrote in his diary of his concerns about the threat of

Catholicism to his fellow Puritans, "[I desire] to have our People better fortified, not only against the *Wiles* of *Popery*, but also against the *Snares* of all other Errors, whereby they may be endangered" (*Diary*, 572). The Puritans were a sect of the Anglican Church who believed that the first English Reformation did not go far enough in reforming the Church of England. Scholar Perry Miller, summarizes that "Puritanism was the belief that the reform should be continued, that more abuses remained to be corrected, that practices still survived from the days of Popery which should be renounced" (40). The Indians who raided New England were usually Catholic, converted by French-Canadian Jesuit missionaries; thus, anti-Catholicism was also anti-Indian (Strong 119). For these reasons, Puritan captivity narratives were often determinedly anti-Catholic. While Williams' narrative is blatantly anti-Catholic, Stockwell's makes little mention of religion at all, let alone the religion of his Indian captors.

Williams' narrative contains a bountiful collection of anti-Catholic stories, telling of the variety of abuses suffered by the captives at the hands of the Catholic Indians and the Jesuit priests. One such example is when Williams wrote of his master attempting to force him to go to mass, stating that he "forcibly pulled me by my head and shoulders out of the wigwam to the church." Once he arrived, Williams described the worship as "a great confusion," in which "one of the jesuits was at the altar, saying mass in a tongue unknown to the savages; and the other, between the altar and the door, saying and singing prayers among the indians at the same time; and many others were at the same time saying over their pater nosters [*sic*], and Ave Mary, by tale from their chapelit [*sic*] or beads on a string" (29). It is clear from his writing that Williams saw the service as chaotic and "idolatrous" (29). Not only that, but Williams was forced by his master to go into the mass, something he argued was "highly unreasonable" to force them to do (28). In combination with the stories of young women beaten and his master biting his fingers for

refusing to crossing themselves, Williams' narrative portrays the Catholics as violent and evil (57-58; 31).

Stockwell's narrative lacks any mention of Catholicism. He does mention that the Indians asked him to pray, "and confessed that they could do nothing; they would have us Pray, and see what the *English-man's God* could do" (Stockwell 48). Puritan readers would likely have interpreted this to mean that whatever god the Indians worshiped failed them, which is, by severest exegesis, a vague reference to the fact that the idolatrous practices and prayers of the Catholic Indians did not bring them the help of God. This reading is not likely a suitable interpretation of the text, but even if it is, Stockwell's sole mention of religion, let alone the Catholic faith, is short and by no means powerfully anti-Catholic. Most scholars would agree with the analysis of Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney: "Nor does he [Stockwell] share Williams's anti-Catholic agenda. Instead he is downright grateful to the French Catholics who eventually secured his release" (37). Readers of Stockwell's narrative could hardly recognize that it was written by a Puritan, particularly when compared to Williams' narrative, because it lacks any strongly religious statements for Puritans or against Catholics. This means that Puritan readers would not have seen the story of Stockwell as a truly Puritan tale, and because of that it did not gain nearly as much popularity as Williams' account.

The fourth and final reason that Williams' narrative grew popular while Stockwell's did not is that Williams was promoted by his relatives in the influential Mather family while Stockwell lacked such a network of promotion. According to Haefeli and Sweeney, John Williams was "well integrated into the ecclesiastical culture of Massachusetts Bay and the Connecticut valley" (*Captors and Captives* 26). He was born into a "well-to-do" family and attended Harvard. Because of his financial situation and his education, Williams started his adult

life at an advantage. This advantage only increased when he wed Eunice Mather; "The match allied John to three prominent New England clergymen: The Reverend Increase Mather of Boston, his wife's uncle, the Reverend Solomon Stoddard of Northampton, her stepfather, and the late Reverend John Warham of Windsor, her grandfather" (Haefeli and Sweeney, *Captive Histories* 89). Thus, the Williams family was well connected both to the Mather family and multiple other prominent families when the Williamses were taken captive. This relation prompted the Mathers to support the Williamses while they were in captivity. Cotton Mather demonstrated that Williams had his support in his extensive diary:

> I composed a Collection of Memorables relating to the Captives; the marvellous [*sic*] displays [*sic*] of the Divine power and Goodness, towards many of them . . . and a Copy of a *Pastoral Letter* written by the worthy Minister,[24] who is now a Captive; (that so he may be doing Service, even when confined from Serviceableness:)
> And I gave this Collection to the Bookseller, that it may be published. . . . It is entituled [*sic*], GOOD FETCH'D OUT OF EVIL. (*Diary* 567-568)

In this entry of his diary, Mather explains that he published a letter from Williams, who was still in Canada. This was the first of many instances in which Mather promoted the story of Williams for pastoral and political purposes. Scholars expound up on Mather's motivation to promote Williams saying, "Cotton Mather strongly believed that Williams, the first New England minister to be taken prisoner by the French and Indians, had a particular responsibility to address concerns raised by his captivity" (Haefeli and Sweeney, "Recurrent Seller" 345). The week Williams returned, Mather asked him "to preach my Lecture, unto a great Auditory," thereby putting him in a highly public pulpit, discussing his captivity (*Diary* 575). Because of the

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[24] This "worthy Minister" is John Williams, see C. Mather, *Diary* 568 n1.

assistance of the Mather family, Williams' narrative became widely popular and has been characterized as a "*recurrent seller*" in America's history, by modern scholars (Haefeli and Sweeney, "Recurrent Seller" 342).

Stockwell, however, had no important or well-known relatives in any historical records. Despite his average birth, Stockwell had a few instances of interaction with the Mather family. He boarded with Samuel Mather for at time in Deerfield, but eventually moved out due to an "unpaid board bill" (Sheldon 328). Though he lived with a Mather for a time, it appears that the bond was not strong enough for his debt to be forgiven or put off. In addition to this living arrangement, Stockwell's narrative was published in an essay by Increase Mather, titled *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*, which contained a collection of stories about Puritan colonists in dire situations who were miraculously saved by God. These minor interactions with the Mather family did not aid Stockwell's narrative gain popularity, and his narrative remains relatively unknown (Haefeli and Sweeney, *Captive Histories* 37-38).

Of the thousands of Indian captivity narratives published, that of the Reverend John Williams is one of the best known, while Quintin Stockwell's narrative is little known. The reason for this can be traced back to the Puritans to whom the narratives were first introduced. What they expected from a story of this sort was fulfilled by Williams' narrative, but not by Stockwell's. Scholars Haefeli and Sweeney write, "By modeling personal redemption and conversion in extreme circumstances, such personal stories inspire faith and, moreover, herald a collective reformation for all of New England" ("Recurrent Seller" 346) The Puritans expected faith to come to the forefront of any book they read. The only Puritan faith in Stockwell's narrative was in the introductory comments made by Mather before and after the narrative itself. Because of this lack, readers of Stockwell's narrative did not appreciate his redemption as a

miracle that served as a confirmation of their beliefs, but rather as an entertaining adventure without any greater significance (Strong 116-117). After the Puritans initially chose read Williams' narrative more frequently than Stockwell's, this trend perpetuated. It is possible that Williams' narrative remained popular simply because it was popular at the time it was published, and Stockwell's is not for the same reason. However, a more significant reason that modern readers of the Indian captivity narrative are more likely to read Williams' than Stockwell's is because despite the three hundred years that separate modern readers from the original readers, we still enjoy a good redemptive story of God saving our ancestors from danger. As scholar R.W.G. Vail puts it, "The Greeks had a name for it and they called it Katharsis; we might speak of it as 'synthetic tragedy.' All civilized nations have realized the value of seasoning the joyousness of their recreation with a poem, a play, or a story of the misfortunes and tragedies of others" (24).

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Commentary

Emily Youree

Necessary Evil: A Reader-Response View of *Richard III*

Shakespeare's Richard III is undoubtedly one of the most famous villains of literature and of the stage. He is also one of the most controversial characters in Shakespeare's plays, eliciting near opposite reactions from different readers. While he is generally accepted as playing the role of a villain in his titular play, many audiences see Richard as a compelling character, and believe that at least some of his actions and motives are understandable. I interpret the character of Richard III as neutral: that he is a necessary evil to clear the way for a new Tudor dynasty but justly deserved his death.

One reason that readers and audiences are sympathetic to Richard is so obvious it is hidden: the play is about him. He is the first character that we see, and his are the first words we hear. The structure of the play is that of a tragedy; the narrative follows one character as he is slowly and inevitably ruined by his fatal flaw. This narrative architecture lends itself to a sympathetic reaction from the reader, as Shakespeare shows us the facets and complexity of his character. We understand Richard (or try to) and are invested in him, and with this investment, we can't help but feel some prick of fondness for him.

Richard's self-proclaimed status as an underdog also garners the reader's sympathy. From the beginning of the play, Richard makes his deformity clear to the audience by saying that he is "deformed, unfinished, sent before my time/Into this breathing world scare half made up" (1.1.20-1). Throughout the play, other characters are repulsed by his physical appearance, and his enemies dredge up his ugliness to insult him. Margaret calls him an "elvish-marked, abortive,

rooting hog," (1.3.226), Anne calls him a "lump of foul deformity" (1.2.57), and his own mother calls him a toad (4.4.145). He seems convinced that he really is as hideous as everyone claims and is resigned to his lot at the bottom rung of his social ladder due to his appearance. He never tries to deny his ugliness, admitting that he is "so lamely and unfashionable/That dogs bark at me as I halt by them" (1.1.22-3). Shakespeare presents Richard—and Richard presents himself—as a classic underdog, and modern audiences love an underdog. He has no control over his appearance, after all, and we have all been taught never to judge a book by its cover. Paradoxically, the very ugliness that produces disgust within the play produces sympathy in its reader.

Another powerful aspect of the play that evokes sympathy for Richard is the repeated interference of fate. In the opening monologue, Richard emphasizes that he was made to be hideous and claims that it is impossible for him to be a lover and that he, therefore, must be a villain (1.1.14-30). Assuming that he is being sincere and not simply using this as a rhetorical strategy, Richard believes that he was born to be evil and that villainy is his only option. He believes that his intentions and the actions that he is soon to commit are not his fault, but the fault of fate. Even if the reader rejects the notion of an otherworldly force controlling Richard's actions in the play, the reader still must come to terms with why he would believe that he has no other options. In the second act, Richard tells his family that he has been "a pack-horse of his [Edward's] great affairs" (Shakespeare 1.3.120) and that "To royalize his blood I spent mine own" (1.3.123), implying that his family is to blame for his villainy. This is not a far-fetched idea, especially in light of the previously mentioned disgust his family has for his physical appearance. A reader could interpret Richard's personality as created by social forces and his

villainy stemming from the abuse of his family. Whether the reader interprets fate or social forces as the ultimate factor, the argument that Richard is not to blame is a compelling one.

My interpretation of Richard's character falls between the two extremes of blame and innocence. While he is undeniably sympathetic at times, especially in his opening monologue in 1.1 and his introspective monologue after waking up from his nightmare in 5.1, he is undeniably repugnant at others, such as his insistence on killing the young princes in 4.2 and his disgusting language when speaking to Elizabeth about her daughter in 4.4. I ache for Richard the social outcast; I burn with anger at Richard the child-murderer. After bouncing between hatred and pity for the first few acts, by the end of the play I settled on a decidedly neutral stance regarding Richard. I interpret Richard as a necessary evil, unconsciously clearing the way for a brighter future of which he cannot be a part.

Although Richard is unquestionably immoral, I believe that his family is not sinless either. Margaret's speech heavily impacted my view of the play's characters. In 1.3, she accuses all of the Yorks: "A husband and a son thou ow'st to me—/And thou a kingdom—all of you allegiance" (1.3.168-79). Because of Edward and his brothers, she has lost everything. Margaret is not free of blame herself, but her fall from power to helplessness is a vivid reminder of the destructive cycle that the line of York has created. Richard's first interactions with his family in 1.3 reinforce the idea of the Yorks' questionable morals, as Richard reminds them of their war with the Lancasters (1.3.119-35). Shakespeare also makes it clear that Richmond is the hero of the story, portraying Richmond as a powerful, blameless character, while showing the members of the York family to be sickly (1.3.1-6), arrogant (1.3.102-9), or short-sighted (1.4.222-3). While I sympathized with them, I could never wholeheartedly say that they deserved to keep the throne any more than Richard deserved to steal it.

If neither Richard nor his family deserves to wear the crown, the logical conclusion is that a new dynasty must replace them. The only way to break the toxic cycle is to remove the people who caused it in the first place, and this is precisely what Richard does. With disturbing relentlessness, he kills off every male heir to the throne, essentially ending the line of York. I believe his role in the play is the same as his claimed role in his family: to be a necessary evil, doing the dirty work required to pave the way for a new dynasty. He plucks out the weeds until he himself is uprooted by Richmond. Necessary evil is still evil, and since Richard commits his crimes without any thought of a higher cause, he does not deserve to live in the world he unintentionally creates. Only Richmond, separated from the destructive Yorks, can establish a new dynasty of peace and "unite the white rose and the red" (5.5.19) as Henry Tudor. I interpret Richard as the means to that ultimate end.

My response to Richard is shaped not only by the text itself but also by my background as a Shakespeare and British history enthusiast. Since Elizabeth I was the reigning monarch at the time Shakespeare wrote this play, I expected Shakespeare to craft a narrative favorable to her grandfather, Henry Tudor. Since I began my reading of the play with this expectation, I saw what I was looking for: a narrative that fits into the larger picture of the Tudor dynasty, and a central character who plays a key role in this narrative. I see Richard and his actions not in the isolated compartment of the play but within the overarching events and themes of Shakespeare's many plays focusing on the British kings. Instead of seeing him as a simple hero or villain, I see him as a faulty but essential cog in a complex mechanism. My interests influenced my response the play and to Richard.

Although many readers view Richard as a sympathetic character because of his central role in the play, his status as an underdog, and the underlying theme of fate driving his actions, I

do not believe that he is a hero or that his crimes are excusable. Neither do I believe he is a complete villain whose actions are purposeless. Because of Shakespeare's subtle characterization of the York family as less than virtuous, as well as my prior knowledge of the historical background of the play, my feelings about him are both neutral and complex. I believe that his actions are wrong but necessary, that Richard is evil but unknowingly serves a higher good. In a roundabout way, the play has a message of hope: even the vilest actions, done with the worst of intentions, can work for good.

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Review

David W. Chapman

Bringing Prisons to Light

Griffiths, Alison. *Carceral Fantasies: Cinema and Prison in Early Twentieth-Century America*.

Columbia UP, 2016. 472 pp. $40.00. Cloth.

Alison Griffiths, a professor at Baruch College (CUNY) has long explored the intersections of film with other modes of discovery (such as anthropology) and other places of viewership (including museum displays). In her most recent book, *Carceral Fantasies*, she seeks to understand the intersections between film and prison, considering both the prison as a venue where films are watched and a location where they are made. The first notion—the prison as a place where films are viewed—may not immediately seem worthy of study. Is every audience not essentially "captive" within the walls of the theatre for the duration of the film? The difference is obviously that typical moviegoers see the film as a part of their life experiences—the streets they walk, the shops they visit, and the homes they inhabit. The prisoners look at the film as a depiction of an outside world, perhaps a world remembered, or perhaps a world in which they never fully participated.

The second purpose of the book is to think of prison and prisoners as objects to be filmed. Here the reader has no difficulty imagining the purpose of Griffith's enterprise. Contemporary writers and producers are fascinated with the prison space, and viewers are exposed to a steady stream of television and movies that provide glimpses into a world that is both alluring in its exoticism and alarming in its potential for violence and dehumanization. Television series such

as *Oz* and *Orange is the New Black* depend on this push-pull relationship to attract viewers who may express horror at prison conditions, but find themselves fascinated by the drama of prison life.

Both the understanding that prisoners have of the outside world through film and the image of prisons that is reinforced by dramatic reconstructions of prison life are, indeed, *carceral fantasies*. Griffiths notes that the vicarious experience of the outside world that prisoners believe approximates real life is never the world as it is. Similarly, the common tropes of prison life, from striped uniforms and orange jumpsuits to mass riots and prison escapes, tend to normalize the exceptional. The more typical prison experiences—unremitting tedium and stultifying routines—are seldom a subject for cinematic portrayal.

Griffiths focuses her investigation on the early part of the twentieth century, primarily in New York prisons. While this method may limit any sociological generalizations, it allows readers to place major trends in both film history and penal reform in a highly textured environment. For instance, the prison reform movement during the Progressive Era sought to provide a wide range of cultural and educational programs for inmates. As one of Sing Sing's wardens proclaimed, he wished to "dissipate . . . the oppressiveness of prison life" (116). Films were often shown in order to provide a moral uplift and to habituate prisoners to "acceptable behavior." Of course, the irony is that many films of the era were also romanticizing the lives of gangsters and bank robbers, precisely because they provided an escape from the mundaneness of everyday life.

In the first section, "The Carceral Imaginary," Griffiths ranges widely over depictions of both prisons and executions distributed for commercial audiences. Of particular interest is *The Execution of Czolgosz, with Panorama of Auburn Prison* by Thomas Edison. Many know that

Edison was the inventor of the motion picture camera. Fewer know that he worked behind the scenes in developing the electric chair. After Edison served as an expert witness, testifying to the effectiveness of alternating current in producing a speedy death, William Kemmler was ordered to be electrocuted at Auburn Prison. The electrocution was horribly botched (some insisted an axe would have been more humane). In an attempt to clear his name, Edison produced a film only a few years after the Kemmler debacle on the execution of Leon Czolgolz, President McKinley's assassin. The film capitalized on the public outrage stirred by the assassination and allowed Edison to assure his viewers that the method of execution he had championed— electrocution—was a safe and humane way of ending a person's life. Griffiths notes that both the film and the electric chair were attempts to sanitize the execution process.

Griffiths decidedly breaks new ground in her research on "The Carceral Spectator." She consults prison records, city newspapers, and in-house publications to understand what prisoners were being shown and for what reasons. Of course, some observers criticized wardens for "coddling" prisoners with such entertainment, but many wardens felt that watching films gave a sense of normalcy to prison life and created a greater sense of community. Even Hollywood took notice of the new audience for their films; some studios went so far as to sponsor contests for prisoners in order to build interest for upcoming releases.

The two themes of the earlier sections—prisoners as subjects and prisoners as viewers— converge in the final section of the book on "The Carceral Reformer," in which the film is used as an instrument of social change to improve conditions in the prisons. For instance, the Joint Commission on Prison Reform commissioned Katherine Bleecker in 1914 to produce a film that would bring the abuses of the prison system to light. Bleecker is a fascinating figure who single-handedly writes the script, directs the film, and operates the camera. Soon commercial films

exposing the horrors of prison life were being released, such as Raoul Walsh's *The Honor System* (1917) and Sidney Olcott's *The Right Way* (1921). Although many of these films were melodramatic accounts of innocent inmates and sadistic guards, they did help engender a public debate about the conditions in the prisons and the failings of the justice system.

Many readers of *Carceral Fantasies* may find it not fully formed, as Griffith ranges freely from medieval depictions of saints in prison at one moment to prison executions in contemporary films at the next. It is likely that neither the prison reformer, the film critic, nor the sociologist will find the book entirely satisfactory. The interdisciplinarity of the approach is both its strength and its weakness, allowing Griffiths to pursue loosely-related ideas that provide new insights into the prison world, but also undermining any systematic development of those ideas. However, the original research she has performed, especially in understanding the nature of the carceral spectator, makes a significant contribution to film history, particularly film as a cultural artifact. She provides a glimpse of a nearly invisible audience that may have discovered in film their only connection to the world at large. In doing so, Griffiths brings light to what remains one of the most hidden places in our society.

Essay

Lauren Engle

Masculinity, Humor, and Modern War in *Generation Kill*

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The US Marine Corps is one of the most powerful symbols of masculinity in modern American culture. The institution, as shown in *Generation Kill*, is comprised of some of the most lethal men in the country, who celebrate the virility of their profession. The book *Generation Kill* and the HBO film adaptation by the same title chronicle the experiences of marines in the First Reconnaissance Battalion, which led the US invasion of Iraq immediately following 9/11. While every individual in the story has vastly different reasons for enlisting, a part of their collective decision invariably responds to societal calls to manhood. In striving to flesh out the military brand of masculinity, marines place enormous value on profanity and insensitivity as a means for displaying their toughness. After experiencing combat, however, some of the characters begin to reveal cracks in their stoic façades. From these personality fissures, dark humor bubbles up to the surface as the men try to reconcile their sense of humanity with their actions. The ultimate unfairness of modern war, which frequently claims the lives of innocent civilians, especially grates on the consciousness of the soldiers. The marines' sardonic tones and use of dark humor in Evan Wright's memoir *Generation Kill* and the HBO adaptation are expressions of internal tensions between ethical and masculine values.

Because the Marine Corps is a traditionally male-dominated institution, social values associated with masculinity are especially important among soldiers. Even the title of their position, "Reconnaissance Man," invites the marines to revel in the exclusion of women and of all things perceived as unmanly. According to Mosher and Tomkins, these values make up the

"macho personality constellation," which applauds callous sexual attitudes, and views violence as manly and danger as exciting (Mosher 60). Being constantly surrounded by other men who similarly glorify the "macho man image" enforces masculine ideals, "simultaneously justifying [the] lifestyle and celebrating [the] worldview" of this group of men (Mosher). As soldiers, the view of "danger as exciting" and "violence as manly" is especially pertinent and illustrated early in the memoir as Wright observes that, "what unites them is an almost reckless desire to test themselves in the most extreme circumstances" (24). At one point during the invasion, the marines fight their way through a town while being shot at from all sides, and upon emerging unscathed, they are delirious with excitement (Wright 30). While most of the marines are in an adrenaline-induced hysteria after the battle, some attempt to recognize the gravity of the event and mourn the destruction they wreak. Observing Fick in particular, Wright says that "he, like everyone else, seems to be wrestling with excitement and a profound awareness of the seriousness of this situation" (32). Wright's description reveals an internal tension between ethical values and a traditionally masculine tendency to delight in action.

In the tight brotherhood of Reconnaissance marines, the group develops its own set of values and expectations. Most of the norms that the marines collectively impose upon one another are related to maintaining an image of insensitivity, stoicism, and toughness. Failure to maintain this image results in immediate and graceless judgment from the pack as illustrated by Colbert and Person who, "stare together at the marine they deem cowardly, bonding in their mutual contempt" (57). Expressed another way, the "sharing [of] the ideology of machismo bonds men into male honor societies…and divides the society into the strong and the weak in accordance with success in embodying the ideals of 'real masculine superiority'" (Mosher 64). The tight-knit community of Reconnaissance marines directly exemplifies such a "male honor

society," in which membership is dependent upon the individual's ability to maintain an image of masculinity.

The marines view themselves as warriors—the top rung on the hierarchy of manliness—and therefore expect their efforts to reflect the strongman/savior archetype, an expectation that is rarely, if ever, fulfilled during their time in Iraq. According to McMaster, the soldiers strive toward a "warrior ethos," which is composed of values such as duty, loyalty, honor, courage, and self-sacrifice. This ethos is important to soldiers "because it makes war 'less inhumane'" (McMaster 19). Perhaps the best picture of the soldiers' failure to realize this "warrior ethos" is when the marines drive Humvees through a town in Iraq (*Generation Kill* 56:43-59:40). The filming of this section begins with a crane shot in which the camera is slowly lowered into an empty alleyway in a manner reminiscent of old western films (*Generation Kill* 55:47-56:07). The complete chaos and destruction that follows, however, dispels the storybook image of a western showdown. In this battle, there was not an equal opportunity for both sides to win, and the victor did not emerge solely as a result of his own skill. In this fight, the marines raced through the town in Humvees while shooting with advanced weaponry at a ragtag group of jihadi combatants. Nothing about this encounter, save the empty alleyway, resembled the warrior showdown the marines had envisioned. Colbert sums it up best later on in the film when he says, "We're not being warriors out here; they're just using us as machine operators" (*Generation Kill* 54:21-30). Colbert's ironic and cynical tone expresses his disgust with the American military's modern brand of warrior that does not align itself with the ethical standards to which he holds himself accountable.

Within the social construct of the military, the marines are not allowed to show fear, shame, or distress, but they can alternatively express these feelings through dark humor and

sardonic comments. The men in the story often use humor as a way to "reinterpret the environment positively, making it less threatening and thus less frightening" (Watson 253). Humor not only makes their environment appear less threatening but also allows the men to minimize the reality of the destruction they cause. Mockery and technical jargon play especially important roles in helping the marines reinterpret their environment. Wright notices this tendency amongst the soldiers and writes that "marines deal with the stress through black humor," citing one widely circulated joke: "What's the first thing you feel when you shoot a civilian? The recoil of your rifle" (219). Insensitive jokes such as this one employ technical jargon and allow the marines to avoid dealing with the reality of the damage they create. By simply describing one girl whose "head slides off and her brains fall out" as a "civilian," the horrible reality of her death is diminished and therefore more easily reconciled (Wright 218). The accepted idea is that to be a "real man," one must be "callous to distress in others" (Mosher 66). Because the soldiers are endlessly striving to embody the insensitive "macho man," they try to reconcile their ethical dilemmas through acts of toughness, often emerging through use of dark humor. After another shooting in the book, one of the marines exclaims, "'We shredded him' . . . 'we fucking redecorated downtown Nasiriyah'" (Wright 108). In his analysis of this man's response to violence, Wright mentions that among marines after a battle, "there's an almost giddy shame, an uneasy exultation in having committed society's ultimate taboo . . ." (109). Even in their post-battle adrenaline rush, a part of each marine recognizes the evil in murder and expresses guilt through mordant excitement. Because "shame itself is viewed as an 'inferior feminine' affect," the marines employ "humiliation and contempt to control distress and fear" (Mosher 68). As a result, there is often a tension between what soldiers are permitted to do in the social construct of the military and what they feel is ethically right.

As the story progresses, the marines become increasingly disillusioned with their purpose as soldiers and begin to express ethical confusion with their actions in Iraq through cynical comments and stoic silence. For soldiers, believing that they have "behaved in a professional, disciplined, moral manner when confronting the enemy is . . . most important" (McMaster 17). The military tries to afford this knowledge to its soldiers through strict rules of engagement, or ROE. During the invasion, however, the ROE change frequently, raising important ethical questions. According to Wright, the ROE "basically create an illusion of moral order where there is none. The marines operate in chaos" (176). Wright then sarcastically observes that once a soldier pulls the trigger, he ". . . has entered a game of moral chance . . ." where he is ". . . as likely to go down as a hero or as a baby killer" (176). While the ROE attempt to create a sense of morality and professionalism, concrete knowledge of ethical behavior is not frequently afforded to the men; they often engender more collateral damage than legitimate kills. As a result, many soldiers struggle to make peace with taking innocent life. Colbert, in his socialized inability to display sensitivity, deals with his feelings of guilt in stoic silence. Stoicism is a trait that is socially accepted as a "manful" way to bear distress, trauma, and guilt; therefore, it is allowed in the social construct of the military (Mosher 63). In the memoir, after Trombley shoots the Bedouin boy, Colbert blames himself and afterwards is "privately inconsolable," confessing that he is going to "have to bring this home with [him] and live with it" (Wright 174). For Colbert, any display of emotion or sensitivity must be held privately for fear of being perceived as weak by his men. After this same event in the film, the camera shows Colbert brooding alone in the dark, separated from his men both physically and emotionally, caught up in shame that he is loath to display (*Generation Kill* 1:00:00-1:00:18). Questions of ethics are often handled in this silent manner, without letting others perceive internal struggles with guilt.

The incompetence of officers and lack of communication throughout the chain of command give rise to ethical questions that disaffected marines discuss sarcastically. The use of highly specialized Reconnaissance marines in a manner totally contrary to their training causes the men to feel that commanding officers see them as expendable. According to Watson, "Modern psychological research has found that people demonstrate an increased liking for 'hostile' humor following uncontrollable experiences." The dark and ironic wit that is typified among the marines as the story progresses is then unsurprising, as the men are continuously thrown into chaotic scenes by their superiors, where they have no control over their own fate. The incompetence of commanders is what gives rise to cynical observations such as Colbert's claim that he and the other marines are not "being warriors out [there]," but that the US military was "just using [them] as machine operators" (*Generation Kill* 54:21-30). These comments are common among marines as the invasion progresses and they become increasingly doubtful of the US military's ability to provide clear ethical and political purpose for war in Iraq. The ethical conflict between officers and grunts comes to a head when Trombley shoots the Bedouin boy. When Ferrando denies the request to medevac the boy, Lt. Fick approves Colbert and Doc Bryan's show of insubordination, saying, "If we didn't do something…the platoon would have fallen apart" (Wright 173). Fick had observed that his "best men had become ineffective – angry at the command and personally devastated," so he decided that an act of disrespect to save the Bedouin boy's life was ethically more important in that moment than following orders (Wright 173). Within the masculine society of the military, challenging an authority figure is a serious offence, and the willingness of these marines to do so for an injured civilian represents the strain between manly and moral codes.

Combat engenders a tension between values of morality and masculinity within the marines characterized in *Generation Kill*, and they release this tension through black humor and cynical observations throughout the film and memoir. Although many times in the story, the marines appear rough, profane, and insensitive, much of their behavior results from an effort to legitimize their manhood and to deal with the stress of combat.

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Essay

Jud Potter

Rashomon, *Godzilla,* and the "abyssal regions" of the Human Experience:

Japanese Cinema after World War II

After the Second World War, Japan was in turmoil. The nation was economically shattered by prolonged warfare on multiple fronts. The horrific bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima was socially and culturally devastating. The complete and unconditional surrender of the nation led to a period of American "reconstruction" helmed by General MacArthur. American control of the highest levels of Japanese political and cultural power led to the oppression of the traditional ways that got Japan into the war in the first place. Traditions such as Bushido, or the way of the Samurai, were suppressed in popular culture and socially discouraged. The Japanese film industry was no exception to American control. However, during the American occupation in the 1950s, films began to demonstrate an acute self-awareness of their post-war socio-cultural context. Two such films are Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950) and Ishirô Honda's *Godzilla* (1954)*.* Both films explore the loss of the traditional culture and the advent of new, untested cultural paradigms. They demonstrate the irreparably fallible and subjective nature of the human experience. In other words, *Godzilla* reflects the war itself, a world falling apart. *Rashomon* depicts the struggle for existence and a search for truth in a world that has already been destroyed. The films arise from a culture searching for identity in a fundamentally changed world in which traditional values have failed, new value systems are unproven, and objective truth is more illusory than ever. These films

demonstrate how a culturally devastated Japan could begin processing the horrors of the Second World War through the externalization and exploration of trauma in cinema.

Searching for a National Narrative in the Ruins of the *Rashomon* Gate

Rashomon was created in the immediate aftermath of the war, and as a result it presents a dim, nihilistic version of post-war Japanese culture. *Rashomon* is a film of conflicting, competing narratives. The film makes no conclusions and leaves the viewers to decide what to make of the dissonant threads that have been pulled before them. The film's frame story takes place in the shelter of the ruined Rashomon Temple Gate during a torrential, possibly apocalyptic, rainstorm. Set in a feudal era, the film shows us a culture that is decayed or destroyed. A Japanese historian provides an enlightening perspective that illuminates the ruined gate and the rainstorm. He says, "I would simply suggest that war events and war responsibility also remain problematic in the case of Japan, which arguably stands in a state of unresolved melancholy" (Sugimoto 3). A feeling of "unresolved melancholy" also permeates the film. *Rashomon* is a nesting doll of narrative in which one story leads into another. The outermost narrative layer, or the frame narrative, takes place underneath the ruins of the titular gate. The frame narrative in the film maintains this idea of "unresolved melancholy" with the ruined gate, heavy shadows, and rainstorm. By working through the chaos of stories that they have heard, the characters in the frame narrative are trying to rebuild some semblance of civilization or order.

These events center on the death of a Samurai, recalling the post-war cultural turmoil of the late 1940s. The Americans eradicated Bushido, the creed of the Samurai, and its traditions from the culture. General MacArthur and company made it a point to eradicate anything that glorified the Samurai in popular culture. The American justification for this was that the Bushido and similar traditions led to Japanese aggression in the first place. While policies such as these

might have stopped the fighting, they sent the culture into an existential crisis of uncertainty. After many of the traditions that Japanese people used to define themselves were taken away, they faced the real possibility that the Japan of the next generation would be completely unrecognizable to the present day. In this spirit, many clung to remnants of tradition, whether it was the family sword or stories of Samurai honor and exploits. The fire that the men try to build up during the film visually symbolizes this clinging to civilization or some semblance of order. The fire is significantly extinguished at the end of the movie, when the Commoner has heard all sides of the story.

The Woodcutter and the Monk, two of the characters in the frame narrative, have failed to present a convincing version of the events they are trying to relate—they present several conflicting versions of the same story. The Commoner, to whom they are relaying these stories, is unconvinced by the answers of religion that the Monk has to offer. They fail to make a cohesive case that has any semblance of objective truth. He laughs at the fact that all of the narratives seem to contradict each other and that truth essentially does not matter or is not accessible. Here, one can see the nihilistic inclination of the film beginning to emerge. The Commoner, whose very name suggests that he is a representative of the Japanese people, is the one who gives up on starting the fire in the end. This is a film about a nation that has gone through very recent trauma, and is perhaps not finished processing it. Mark Williams explains:

> According to the philosopher Walter Davis, traumatic events and experiences must be 'constituted' before they can be assimilated, integrated and understood (2003: 142). As such, what is required, in addition to the historical facts, is the subjective element (including emotion). And I am certainly not alone in arguing that this is precisely what the literary artist is in a unique position to provide.

(Williams 11)

This process of constitution is precisely what Kurosawa and company accomplish in *Rashomon.*
They constitute the trauma of the war, quantifying and qualifying the cultural fallout of the war.
The film considers the despair and hopelessness of a nation that has seen entire cities obliterated
by nuclear weapons and has been oppressed by foreign occupation. Facts are of secondary
importance in the narrative because the audience is never given one definite instance of objective
truth. Everything is subjective and colored by the emotional subjectivities of the speakers. The
end of the war and subsequent occupation would be easier to process if the Japanese people
could paint the Americans as evil foreign invaders and themselves as innocent victims. However,
most Japanese people were not able to view the actions of their own nation as blameless.
Rashomon is a product of a culture that is coming to grips with the horrors that Imperial Japan
itself committed during the war. War historian Zachary Kauffman says:

> The total number of victims of Japanese atrocities may never be known, but it is
> clear that the Japanese murdered, mutilated, tortured, beat, poisoned, starved,
> raped, enslaved (for both sexual and labor purposes), cannibalized, decapitated,
> burned alive, buried alive, froze, hanged by the tongue of, impaled the genitals of,
> pillaged from, and performed medical experiments on millions of men, women,
> and children. (Kaufman 758)

He describes a society that sees itself in ruins and struggles to find a way to cope or even find a
purpose in rebuilding. They are faced with the question of whether or not they deserve to be
rebuilt in the first place. In other words, the end of the war cut Japan's cultural values and
identity to the bone. The Commoner, who is having the many threads of this story woven before
him just as the audience is, laughs incredulously about the notions of Samurai virtue and the

search for truth at court from the very beginning. The destruction of these values has already occurred. Whatever cultural devastation led to the ruination of the Rashomon Temple gate happened long before a bandit came across a Samurai in the woods.

After the war, Japan is a nation without *telos*. The first step to rediscovering some kind of *telos* would be to find a semblance of objective truth. People seek something objective when the world is falling apart, and *Rashomon* depicts both the hopeless struggle to find it and the myriad subjectivities that are so often found in its stead. When objective truth is put into question for a culture that has previously been so existentially certain that they declared war on much of the rest of the world, that culture's foundational tradition is sure to follow objective truth into uncertainty. *Rashomon*'s characters are lost in the cultural ruins of war. The film itself reflects Japan's attempt to begin the healing process by confronting these dark cultural realities.

Rashomon and the Death of Tradition: The Samurai

In *Rashomon*, Kurosawa helps his country face the devastating fact that the traditional ways have failed and been completely uprooted. The Samurai's death starts the events of the narrative (00:11:12). The circumstances of his death prompt several different interpretations of how he died, depending on the speaker. For example, the bandit Tajômaru talks about slaying the Samurai in an epic duel, similar to something out of a child's adventure story. However, the spiritual medium, who gives us the Samurai's perspective, discusses how he killed himself in shame after his defeat and his cuckolding. This interpretation of events is not any truer than the Bandit's because they are both highly subjective. In essence, this Samurai is no more trustworthy than Tajômaru, a simple bandit. Imagine in feudal Europe if, during a trial, one could not observe much difference in the character of a noble, holy knight and a thieving brigand or pirate. In this way, the death and unreliability of the Samurai indicate a new negativity in Japanese feeling

toward objective truth, and the traditions, like Bushido, that got them into World War Two in the first place. The old ways, which would have made the word of a Samurai impeachable and unquestionable, are no longer in place. Kurosawa himself was the son of a family of Samurai. Kurosawa shows the Samurai duel Tajômaru several times in versions told by different characters, and each version presents the Samurai with varying degrees of honor and cowardice.

In this way, Kurosawa's work exemplifies the people's complicated relationship with tradition. While traditions such as Bushido can lead to moments of great honor and heroism, they can also lead to the version of the story in which the Samurai is not a skilled fighter, and is clearly afraid of death (01:11:14). Through the representation of a Samurai on film, Kurosawa conveys the emotion, history, and tradition that people felt for the Samurai class. Most frightening of all, the film's depiction of the Samurai deconstructs the social class and illustrates the fact that there is nothing to replace it. The new absence of the Samurai class, perhaps more than anything, represents the uncertainty caused by a fundamentally shifting culture. The only conclusion that one can safely draw from the characterization of the Samurai is that the loss of the martial and ethical center of Japanese culture leaves them in very uncertain cultural circumstances.

Rashomon and the Death of Tradition: The Woodcutter

The Woodcutter exemplifies the greatest cultural loss after the war. He represents the loss of a sense of objective truth in the middle to lower social classes in Japan. He is the one who spends the most time telling stories, and in my reading, that makes him the emotional center, if not the moral compass, of the film. He is ostensibly the only firsthand witness to the actual event and spends the most time telling the story. It should be noted that Takashi Shimura's character in *Godzilla,* Dr. Yamane, also functions as the moral and intellectual center of the film. This casting

insight points to the possibility that Shimura, the actor, through the palimpsest of his

performances, represented someone who was part of the national consciousness, perhaps similar

to Tom Hanks in contemporary American cinema. The Woodcutter's sense of morality defines

his character; because the horrible things he has seen and heard that day offend his moral

standards, the audience sympathizes with him. Even if there are terrible, morally ambiguous

people such as the Samurai, his wife, and Tajômaru, at least there are the good, common folk

such as the Woodcutter to be the salt of the earth and the moral compass of the nation.

Structurally speaking, it would make more sense to have the audience surrogate character be the

Commoner in the framing scenes of the film. However, using the Commoner as an audience

surrogate does not work because his naked cynicism at the beginning of the film seems at first to

be unfounded, and is certainly unappealing. On the other hand, the Woodcutter is introduced in a

long walking sequence during which he discovers the scene of the crime (00:07:35). This

prolonged sequence, coupled with the fact that the Woodcutter is present in the framing story and

in the trial, serves to make him the most relatable, identifiable character to the audience. He

seems to be the most moral and reliable character in the film, standing in stark contrast to the

morally gray, cynical characters surrounding him. If the Woodcutter is this bastion of morality,

the entire film can be read in a more optimistic context. No matter how dishonest a majority of

the people seem, even when unimpeachable Samurai are shown to lie to protect their own egos,

and even when one stands in the very ruins of civilization, there are still people who will hold

fast to their sense of morality and Truth.

However, the end of the film calls that reading of the character and the larger film into

question (01:21:32). In the Woodcutter's retelling of the story, he omits the detail of where the

knife went and seems to confirm the Commoner's theory that everyone lies, and the only

meaning in the world is that which individuals assign themselves. In fact, the film implies that the Woodcutter pockets the knife for himself because it is expensive and would probably fetch a decent price. Not only does the lie by omission call his character into question, the fact that he compromises his morality for material gain makes it sting much more. Put simply, he has compromised Truth for monetary gain. Kurosawa and company have put the audience in a position to view a character who is named for his profession, which is a very material one at that. He is not named for a virtue, such as truth or something similar. Kurosawa has made the viewers feel like fools for believing that such a person would be capable of the abstract moral and philosophical benevolence that they hoped to see from him. In this way, Kurosawa slowly, subtly places the viewers into a very different frame of mind than they had at the beginning. At the beginning of the film, the Commoner was a crass, heartless cynic and the Woodcutter a hopeful bastion of morality. However, by the end, the audience sympathizes more with the Commoner, feeling betrayed by the Woodcutter and understanding the cynicism of the former in a new way.

In this reading of the film, the final sequence is particularly disturbing and nihilistic (01:26:30). The Woodcutter and company discover a crying baby abandoned at the Rashomon gate, near where they have been telling this story. The Woodcutter ends up walking away with the baby at the end of the film and plans to raise the child as his own. If the audience saw this clip at the beginning of the film, they would see it as a good thing. The Woodcutter is going to teach this baby the morality that he holds on to as he grows old. The ideas of morality, objective truth, and even traditional honor might yet survive through this baby. However, if this reading is continued, then this ending is particularly devastating. The baby is going to learn survival skills from the Woodcutter, such as lying when it benefits you. The baby will not learn the kind of morality that the Woodcutter stood for at the beginning of the film. The baby is born of the ruins

into a ruined world, and it seems like there is no place for the traditional morality that should have been exemplified by the common decency of the Woodcutter and the Samurai's adherence to Bushido. This is a world where the old, traditional values have been displaced by the horrors of the present day, the horrors committed by Japan during World War II and the cultural devastation of losing a war and the deployment of nuclear weapons. All of this was followed by a culturally oppressive occupation. In the world of the film, the horrors take the form of an idea. The idea is that people cannot be trusted, and even those whose virtue should be unimpeachable (such as a Samurai), are fallible and dishonest. Historically, this reading of the character of the Samurai would have easily passed MacArthur's cultural censors. It is certainly not a positive view of the Samurai or the Bushido that he follows. In *Rashomon,* the traditional values of Bushido, and the anarchist ways of Tajômaru are shown to be equally problematic, hypocritical, and illusory in a post nuclear Japan.

The Nihilism of *Rashomon*

Rashomon offers a nihilistic solution to the loss of identity and subsequent existential crisis facing Japan at the end of the war. Beyond the simple deconstruction of traditional value systems, *Rashomon* depicts a nation that sees the physical and cultural ruins that surround it. A repeated motif in the film involves characters laughing manically. Characters laugh when they see the ruins. In other words, characters laugh when they come to an understanding that whatever value system they hold is only a façade disguising the madness and anarchy that have been waiting just behind the thin veneer of civilized society all along. It makes sense that Kurosawa and company would make a film that puts forth such a nihilist philosophy. On top of all the horrors the Japanese went through during and after the war, they also committed a great number of horrible atrocities to the Chinese and others during the same time period. Therefore, the

Japanese people after the war would have had great difficulty viewing themselves as blameless victims of foreign powers seeking to control the culture of their nation. Although they would have had that trouble, they still had to deal with the specter of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, which was not only humbling but also culturally, socially, and existentially devastating. The Samurai, his wife, and Tajômaru all laugh during their testimonies. Although the three aforementioned characters are never physically present in the frame narrative of the film, the idea still holds water. Not only are they formally, literally framed within the gate scenes at the beginning of the film, but the fact that they are being discussed by the characters in the framing scenes fosters the idea of their thematic, if not quite literal presence. Tajômaru laughs the most frequently and with the most enthusiasm because he has been in this state of mind all along; everyone else is just catching up to him (00:30:53). He has always believed that truth was relative and that the Samurai were not authentic, and now that it seems that he might be right, he feels vindicated.

The characters laugh during the particularly subjective, perhaps less truthful portions of their stories. The Commoner also does this when the Monk and the Woodcutter have finished the whole story (01:18:30). The laughter suggests that the characters can see that they are all standing beneath the ruins of Rashomon gate as the fires of civilization burn out. In my reading, Tajômaru has just been standing there a little longer than the rest of the characters. This prior knowledge and wisdom are part of what make his superficially reprehensible character so compelling to audiences. Moreover, standing beneath the ruins, the characters recognize that finding objective truth in the film's central mystery is as preposterous as suddenly finding the titular temple rebuilt around them. All that is left of the civilization that they thought they knew are the smoldering embers of the small fire they huddle around, and in the end, extinguish.

Godzilla: More Than a Monster Movie

Godzilla is a unique film in the history of international cinema, and it holds an even more unique position as a film that simultaneously demonstrates the physical and cultural destruction of Japan in World War II and presents an optimistic view of the future of the country. Before diving too deeply, it is important to establish *Godzilla* as a film worthy of academic study. The first and most obvious way to study the film is as analogous to Japan's experience in World War II. However, there are more ways to view the film than as a war metonym. According to Peter H. Brothers:

> Godzilla is today justifiably recognized as a masterpiece of international filmmaking unsurpassed in its impact and imagination. While King Kong was a modern-era fairy tale and The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms a mere monster movie, Godzilla is much more: a semidocumentary and social commentary filmed from an eyewitness viewpoint of horrific events, from the typhoon-racked beaches of Odo Island to the smoldering streets of Tokyo to the Hospital of the Damned. We find ourselves involved as active participants in a firestorm of biblical proportions and a nightmare filmed in its entirety. (39)

Godzilla is the result of a nation seeing itself fall into cultural and literal ruin at the nuclear end of the war. As a "semidocumentary," the film is able to put the audience on the ground level in the disaster, giving viewers an especially empathetic perspective of the human action on screen. Firstly, a documentary typically tries to represent reality to illustrate a point. The bias and the intent of the filmmaker steer the direction of the film to educate or illicit a response from an audience. When Brothers refers to *Godzilla* as a semi-documentary, he is referring to the way in which the film shows naturalistic performances from across the socio-economic spectrum. Other

than the performances of the lead actors, scenes take place in insert shots as various groups of people see Godzilla's destruction throughout the city in order to show the range of terror, shock, and sadness that one would expect to see during that kind of national crisis. Using these shots in and among shots of the destruction and the lead characters' efforts to stop Godzilla not only humanizes the action on screen, it gives the goings-on a level of verisimilitude they would not otherwise have. Making the film a semi-documentary grounds the fantastic elements on screen in an emotional reality that is immediately relatable.

Godzilla as a Re-creation of World War II

If *Rashomon* presents the ruins of a civilization that has already been destroyed by war, *Godzilla* shows the ruination happening in real time. *Godzilla* depicts the destruction of civilization that the Japanese experienced during and after World War II. One film scholar notes that "Godzilla is in fact a virtual re-creation of the Japanese military and civilian experience during the final months of WWII, even to Godzilla itself, as Honda insisted that the monster's roar sound like an air-raid siren while its footsteps should sound like exploding bombs" (Brothers 38). In the film, the beast visually and aurally evokes memories of wartime Japan. When Godzilla breathes fire on the city, mushroom clouds briefly flash on screen (00:57:40). Nothing is more indicative of civilization crumbling than the cutaway shots during Godzilla's prolonged attack sequence. During the sequence, there are cutaways to different families and groups of people experiencing Godzilla's destructive power. These shots of people serve to ground and humanize the otherwise fantastical, large-scale destruction. The monster tears apart important buildings and landmarks in the city, from radio towers to power plants, that all have something to do with technology.

This destruction of technology ties back to the Japanese anxiety about technology after the war. One such cutaway is incredibly moving: a mother holds her two children close beside her as a building crumbles behind them. She says, "We will be with your father soon," over and over, like a mantra (01:00:58). This scene is heartbreaking, and it implies that the husband died in the war. The symbolism here is heavy, but so is the subject matter. The film still seems appropriate and respectful today. Showing a mother and her children weep in the newly created ruins of Tokyo is an incredibly effective way to allow an audience to experience the devastation of a country and a culture in a uniquely cinematic way.

This kind of cinema is uniquely able to illustrate the tensions of a nation in cultural crisis during traumatic moments. Some of the tensions pulling on the people in *Godzilla* and *Rashomon* come from feelings that traditional values lose their place in the culture formed after nationally trying times. However, this cultural tension demonstrates a key difference between the two films. Although both films offer ways of processing the horrors of the war, *Godzilla* depicts the struggle of the protagonists against the destructive force of the monster that is reminiscent of the war, and they end up triumphing over the beast. *Rashomon*, however, demonstrates a futile search for truth that crumbles into nihilism. *Rashomon* was released four years before *Godzilla*. Perhaps the former's proximity to the war is why a nihilistic worldview was the best way to process the horror at the time. By the same token, *Godzilla*'s later release date allowed the film to confront the horrors of the war in a more direct way. By evoking the semiotics of the war, the film enabled a national catharsis or, at the very least, allowed people to process the post-war period in new ways.

Godzilla Destroys Cities and Tradition

The destruction of cities and people in *Godzilla* is a complex metaphor for the war itself and the traditions that made Japan enter the war in the first place. The film's director, Ishiro Honda, was a war veteran, as Brothers points out:

> Honda knew firsthand the horrors of war. With over seven years of duty as an infantryman in China behind him, he had not only experienced combat but while on leave had also witnessed some of the fire raids on Japanese cities. After the surrender he spent six months as a POW, and after being repatriated he walked through the rubble of what was once the city of Hiroshima. As a result of these events, this film (and it is every inch his film) is a somber testimony of those experiences, continually reinforcing the feeling that nothing can be settled by armed conflicts and that potential destruction stills looms over a Japanese populace helpless to prevent it. (39)

Honda is doing the very thing Walter Davis spoke of earlier. With this film, he is assimilating, integrating, and trying to understand his wartime experiences. Honda saw for himself the destruction of the old nation and the establishment of a new Japan, formed in America's image. In the film, the exorcism scene near the beginning depicts an old ceremony that is the last remnant of a set of mostly forgotten traditions (00:11:08). The scene is visually similar to the scenes at the Rashomon gate in the other film. There are certainly thematic parallels. Perhaps civilizations are in a constant state of loss and forgetting, whether that loss is sudden and violent, like in *Godzilla,* or gradually over time, like the abandoned decay at the gate in *Rashomon.* In any case, the exorcism scene presents an intriguing setup for Godzilla. At this point in the film, the beast has not been seen much. The name "Godzilla" is used in this scene for the first time.

Apparently creatures such as Godzilla have attacked the island intermittently throughout history. The people used to have a whole set of traditions to ward the creature off. However, most have been lost to time. Important symbolic work takes place in this scene; the juxtaposition between the mere idea of Godzilla and ancient, traditional ceremony sets the monster in context with tradition. This contrast complicates the simple notion of the beast as a symbol of the war. Godzilla still symbolizes the war in many ways, but he represents the past traditions coming to punish a culture that is moving into the future while neglecting its past. Even though the Japanese left much of their culture behind due to American mandates, this transition was a difficult and emotionally complicated ordeal for many people. Godzilla represents this complexity. In other words, this scene sets Godzilla in a position of being an ancient entity that punishes the culture for forgetting its origins. Forgetting the old ways leaves the people unprepared. More than just a metaphor for nuclear destruction and the devastation of the war itself, Godzilla represents the old ways coming back to condemn the current generation's disconnection from its past and ancestors. Alternatively, it is possible to read the symbolism of the protagonists' struggle against Godzilla as the struggle to let go of the old ways that got Japan into the war in the first place. In this way, Godzilla embodies the ideas of the war itself and the traditions that brought Japan into it.

Serizawa and Letting Go of the Past

Serizawa, a pseudo-symbolic Samurai, represents the past. Serizawa is a war veteran and scientist. He bears a terrible scar that he covers with an eye patch. In my reading, he symbolizes a Japan that has been scared by its experiences in the war and is unsure how to move on. Moreover, he represents Japan's understandable phobia of technology after the war. However, Yoshiko Ikeda argues, "On the other hand, Japan's economic recovery depended on the embrace

of technology. . . . Japan in 1954 is a transitional monster caught between the imperial past and the post-war industrial future, aroused by the United States H-Bomb tests" (Ikeda 50). In my reading of the film, Serizawa's conflict about using the oxygen destroyer reflects this anxiety. During the climax of the film, he chooses to stay at the bottom of the sea to ensure that his oxygen destroyer detonates properly to defeat Godzilla (01:27:55). In fact, part of Japan's return to economic stability depended heavily on new technology companies. In this way, the idea that the Samurai character is working on technologies that will ultimately kill him but save the country is a particularly culturally savvy choice on the part of the filmmakers.

Serizawa's death is an interesting scene because one reading of Serizawa's demise could be that, in order to move on, Japan must forget, or at least move beyond, the trauma of the past. To defeat the specter of nuclear fallout and the trauma of war, (Godzilla), Japan must let the scarred, grudge-holding, remembering part of itself go (Serizawa). Another important facet of Serizawa's character is that he is engaged to another main character, Emiko. Her affections lie elsewhere, however, with another lead character, Ogata. When Serizawa sacrifices himself, he tells Ogata and Emiko to be happy together. Serizawa gives up being a part of the future of Japan to secure that that future actually happens. The scarred war veteran will take the specter of the memory of war that has haunted the nation down with him. By this sacrifice, he ensures that the relatively innocent Emiko and Ogata are able to start a new life in a Japan that is safe and as free as possible from the scars of war. Although the other characters, watching from the safety of the boat, wanted Serizawa to survive, he died so that there could be any future at all. If he had stayed, Godzilla would most likely have survived to finish destroying the rest of the country. In other words, the old way of life has to be sacrificed in order to secure the future of the nation. Historically, this applies to MacArthur's initiatives, suppressing anything historically Japanese

that could possibly lead back to Bushido or Imperial Japan.

Even though the movie seems to indicate that the loss of the Samurai class is a necessary step for Japan to move forward, Serizawa's death is one of dignity. Serizawa dies a traditional Samurai's death. When he cuts his own cord to the surface, it symbolizes seppuku. This death is a respectful, bittersweet letting go of a complicated but cherished past that is necessary for the country to move forward. In *Godzilla,* the moment is bittersweet. The survivors are faced with the loss of their friend, but they also eagerly anticipate building a new life for themselves and rebuilding the city from all the destruction. However, the death of the Samurai in *Rashomon* paints a much more pessimistic image of the future. However the events of the mystery are interpreted, the Samurai was killed by a bandit, which is not a noble death. His word is not reliable, which is a blemish on what should be his unimpeachable character and, by extension, the unimpeachable character of Japan. Since he is dead, the rest of society seems to have followed suit in abandoning truth and tradition. Perhaps *Rashomon*'s earlier release date, closer to the horrors of the war and its aftermath made the Kurosawa and company more pessimistic about the future. Simultaneously, perhaps with four more years to process the national tragedies that had plagued the country, Honda and company were a bit more optimistic about the future.

The "abyssal regions" of the Human Experience

A line from *Godzilla* that stands out is from Takashi Shimura's character, Dr. Yamane. He says, "The earth has many deep pockets . . . abyssal regions that contain secrets we have yet to discover" (00:16:00). Significantly this line comes during his testimony, when a committee has gathered to figure out what Godzilla actually is. Dr. Yamane then sends out a "fact finding party" to do tests and research where Godzilla first appeared. The testimonial scene and the desire for facts that pervades the film were reminiscent of *Rashomon.* Some of the shots of

Shimura at the stand resemble shots of Shimura giving testimony as the Woodcutter in

Rashomon. More than that, *Rashomon* and *Godzilla* are both exploring the "abyssal regions" of

the human soul. *Rashomon* deals with the capacity of humanity to lie to and harm one another.

Moreover, human beings long for some kind of objective reality but are unable to find

this reality or are at least unable to perceive it. When they do find something they would swear to

and call objective, the testimony of others contradicts their own, and objectivity is once again

lost in the mist of antithetical subjectivities. *Godzilla* can be read as a metaphor for the war and

the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the difficulty of letting go of tradition. *Godzilla*

deals with the same ideas as *Rashomon* on a national, historical scale. Both films deal with

humanity's capacity for extreme destruction, both personally and nationally. In *Rashomon,*

characters lack the ability to rebuild. The characters are unable to keep the fire going in the frame

narrative that symbolizes civilization and the hope for its return. However, Kurosawa, at a time

much closer to the war, is unable to find much hope for a bright future. His film closes with the

Woodcutter walking away from the gate, baby in his arms. The Woodcutter has at the last

moment compromised Truth for material gain, and the audience is left with little hope for the

future or the world in which the child will grow up.

The devastation of entire cities marks the destruction of a civilization from which

characters like Ogata and Emiko will rebuild. Serizawa's sacrifice and the destruction of

Godzilla gives the world of *Godzilla* a more hopeful future than the world of *Rashomon*. The

specters of the past return to the bottom of the sea, and those who are left can rebuild. Even

though Godzilla inflicted unspeakable horror on the people and the city, and sacrifice was

necessary to stop him, the film harbors genuine optimism. Whether through *Rashomon*'s initial

nihilism or *Godzilla's* surprising optimism, the nation's artists and especially its filmmakers

were uniquely positioned to articulate post-war cultural tensions and help the people process enormous loss and extremely complicated emotions.

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Essay

Hudson Reynolds

Slashing the Patriarchy: The Slasher Genre as Gender Critique in Takashi Miike's *Audition*, Jang Cheol-soo's *Bedevilled*, and Pang Ho-cheung's *Dream Home*

The slasher genre has always been a genre of gender. Since its emerging popularity in the late 1970s with John Carpenter's *Halloween*, it enforced specific roles and expectations for the male and female genders. The male is the attacker, while the female is the attacked and objectified subject of terror. The films heavily exploit violence and sex for entertainment purposes while also frequently combining female objectification and violence. The discussion of gender in the slasher film also extends beyond the surface of objectification. Some argue that the genre contains elements of gender equality through female protagonists. Others argue that the female protagonists contribute to the films' sexism. Although contradicting viewpoints often emerge when discussing gender in the slasher film, slasher scholars agree that the films sexualize women and fetishize violence against women. An emerging slasher subgenre forming in East Asian countries subverts the slasher genre's sexualizing of women. The films *Dream Home*, *Audition*, and *Bedevilled* utilize the slasher genre as a gender critique against the films' countries of origin and against the genre itself. Rather than the typical faceless, masculine slasher figure, the films utilize female slashers who overturn genre expectations and signify the revolt against female societal oppression. This paper aims to discuss the films' countries of origin exclusively through the lens of the films themselves rather than present detailed sociological studies on the societies depicted. The patriarchal elements are

not found through societal study but through the films signifying the abusive and objectifying treatment of women.

The slasher genre combines objectification and violence against women for entertainment. Gloria Cowan and Margaret O'Brien discuss the slasher genre's widespread objectification of women and the direct correlation between female sexuality and violence in their article "Gender and Survival vs. Death in Slasher Films: A Content Analysis." Cowan and O'Brian studied the gender, appearance, and sexual behavior of the surviving and non-surviving characters in fifty-four different slasher films. They found that females were not more likely to be killed in a slasher film than males but that most female victims engaged in sexual practices and wore promiscuous clothing as opposed to female survivors, who were not typically sexually active (191-194).

Although slasher films draw a clear correlation between violence and objectification of women, some argue that the slasher genre compels viewers to identify with female characters. Carol Clover argues in her article "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film" that the genre encourages males to identify with female characters. The genre primarily aims for the entertainment of male viewers, but male viewers are unable to identify with a male figure. Typically, the slasher is the only male figure present throughout the course of the film. Slasher films often include shots from the killer's point of view, but males cannot identify with the slasher because of his lack of screen time. The films primarily follow a female character who will either be the last victim or the sole survivor. Male viewers are forced to identify with this character because viewers receive her perspective for most of the film. Male viewers then identify with her as she fights the slasher during the climax of the film. In this way, the slasher

genre offers a heroic female character as opposed to the typical heroic male protagonist (78-79, 85-86).

Other slasher scholars argue that the genre's use of female protagonists contributes to the reinforcement of misogyny and normative gender roles. Klaus Rieser argues in his article "Masculinity and Monstrosity: Characterization and Identification in the Slasher Film" that the female protagonist, often referred to as the "final girl," reinforces sexism because the slasher figure himself represents the combination of masculine and feminine qualities. Although the "final girl" shows strong qualities by defending herself against the slasher, the filmmakers and the audience still heavily sexualize her throughout the conflict. Once the "final girl" defeats the gender ambiguous slasher, heterosexual gender roles—including female subservience—are regained (388-389).

The slasher film's sexualizing of women coheres to Laura Mulvey's extensive discussion of the cinematic male gaze in her article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Mulvey argues that the nature of cinema is voyeuristic because the audience looks into another world existing on the movie screen that is unaware of their gaze. The roles of "gazer" and "gazed upon" are divided into male and female because the films mainly pander to males through elevating the male protagonist and sexualizing female characters (46-48). This gendered structure of visual medium results from patriarchal societies that shape cinema (44). Mulvey directs her discussion toward film in general rather than exclusively the slasher genre, but her observations are heavily pertinent to the slasher genre because of how it panders to the male gaze through excessively sexualizing women and fetishizing violence against women.

Pang Ho-cheung's *Dream Home* heavily utilizes the sex and violence common to the slasher genre to comment on genre and Hong Kong society. The film features a female slasher as

the protagonist, who subverts the sexist society in which she abides. The film portrays Hong Kong's societal sexism through the prominent presence of sexually aggressive males. It also depicts women in subordinate societal roles, such as housewife and prostitute. The protagonist, Cheng, undermines the patriarchal system through her excessive use emasculating violence. The ostensible motivation for Cheng's use of violence appears to be to lower the cost of her desired apartment. Throughout the duration of the film's non-linear story, she desperately saves money, even while Hong Kong's housing market drastically inflates. Although the film offers much economic and political commentary on the surface, subtextual gender commentary (including the presence of objectifying and sexually abusive males) pervades the film. The numerous signs of men objectifying women offer a clear subtextual motive for Cheng's actions.

Dream Home's many instances of objectification show the disregard of women in Hong Kong society. One such instance of objectification occurs when the protagonist scrolls through television channels and discovers explicit pornographic videos. The videos contain images of men aggressively groping moaning women. The moans sound like a combination of pain and exaggerated pleasure. The scenes include men, but only part of them are visible in the frame. The scenes mainly focus on the women who are objects of the men's aggressive behavior (00:12:59-00:13:18). The videos show the presence of sexualized women in this society and demonstrates the sexually aggressive behavior of males in the film. The scene also demonstrates the communal objectification of women by the camera present within the slasher genre. The sexualizing of women on the television screen parallels how the genre eroticizes women by representing them as wearing promiscuous clothing and through portraying overly objectifying sexual scenes.

The film continues commenting on the sexualization of women in the slasher genre in a sequence in which Cheng murders another female. When breaking into the apartment of one of

her soon-to-be victims, Cheng knocks over a maid with the apartment door. The maid then attempts to crawl away from Cheng. As she crawls, a notably exaggerated amount of cleavage appears from her shirt. Cheng then graphically stabs her in the back of her head. The camera's outrageous sexualization of the maid while she undergoes over-the-top brutality exaggerates the eroticized violence of the slasher genre. The camera's objectifying angle filming her breasts also parallels the way the film's male characters sexualize women (00:21:01-00:21:15). Unlike the maid and other female characters, the camera never films Cheng in a sexualized manner. Her contrast to the other female characters leaves the sense that she subverts society's objectification of women.

The sexually aggressive behavior of male characters illustrates the abuse of women within the film. One notable scene includes two young adult males gazing at the actions of two prostitutes. Rather than having sexual relations with them, two men stare as two prostitutes aggressively kiss and remove each other's clothing (00:46:00-00:46:20). The film's portrayal of men voyeuristically watching the sexual actions of women emphasizes the positions of "gazer" and "gazed upon" within cinema itself. One of the prostitutes passes out from intoxication. Minutes later in the scene, another man enters the room. Upon seeing the unconscious prostitute, the man asks if he can touch "it," referring to the woman. He then repulsively gropes her breasts. The use of the word "it" perfectly exemplifies the three men's view of women as objects. All reduce women to merely their bodies. Moments later, the men force cocaine up the unconscious woman's nose in order to engage in sexual relations with her, which reiterates the eroticizing of women; the men disregard the wellbeing of the prostitute because they view her solely as a source of sexual pleasure (00:49:13-00:50:20). This disturbing sequence illustrates that male characters in the film view women solely as sexual objects.

Cheng's murders of the three sexually aggressive males conveys her subversion of patriarchy. The scene opens with Cheng stabbing the man who referred to the prostitute as "it" with a knife. She subverts gender roles by overturning male sexual dominance, which was evident in the prior scene through the sexual mistreatment of the prostitute. Cheng emasculates him and strips him of his sexual dominance by penetrating his stomach with a phallic knife. Cheng further revolts against male dominance through her next victim. During a physical struggle in which one of the sexually aggressive men overpowers Cheng and forces himself on top of her, she kicks him in the testicles. She overturns male dominance by using the masculine symbol of testicles against the sexual aggressor. She then, once again, uses a phallic-shaped weapon, this time a sharp, broken bong, to stab the man, which further signifies her subversion of male power (00:50:44-00:52:47).

Cheng's subversion of the male-driven social order continues with her murder of the final sexually aggressive male. Cheng walks into the back room of the apartment, where the final male engages in sexual relations with one of the prostitutes. The sexual position that the two characters engage in reflects the patriarchal power structure. The two engage in the position typically described crassly as "doggy-style," where the female party rests her hands and knees pressed against a bed or other surface and faces away from the dominant party. The male party then clasps his hands around the female's hips and pulls her against his penis in a repetitive motion to engage in intercourse. This dominating position reflects the gender hegemony because the male is on top while the female is crouched in a submissive and dehumanizing position. The sexual position represents subservient role of women in patriarchal societies. When Cheng interrupts the sexually engaged characters, she breaks the current gender hierarchy. Cheng stabs the male character in the back several times while he remains in the dominant sexual position.

She then slashes off his erect penis. Blood splashes onto the prostitute's buttocks and back, simulating semen landing. She then throws the severed penis onto the bed, where the camera then cuts to a close-up of the penis slowly releasing semen (01:07:20-01:08:20). The man in the dominant position shows male's dominant position in society. Cutting off his penis while he remains in a dominant position exemplifies Cheng castrating the androcentric society. The act of castration epitomizes the metaphorical castration of male dominance occurring within her subversive killings. The explicit presentation of the blood spatter and climax emphasizes emasculation and the denial of sexual gratification. By cutting off his penis while he ejaculates, Cheng strips the character of the pleasure he is about to obtain through his objectifying mistreatment of women. The blood spatter that simulates ejaculation subverts the dominant act of ejaculation. Rather than spreading his seed, the man spreads the sign of his emasculation. The scene further demonstrates the man's lack of sexual dominance by showing the penis weakly releasing semen away from the prostitute. The scene acts as a crux for the film's revolt against the patriarchal society and slasher genre by presenting the man in the sexually dominant position over women then showing the female slasher eunuchize him.

Takashi Miike's *Audition* further exemplifies the subversion of patriarchal societies and the slasher genre through using the male gaze reflexively alongside a female slasher. The film offers reflexivity when the characters hold a casting audition. The audition occurs because a widower, Aoyama, tells his film producer friend, Yoshikawa, that he is searching for a new wife. When Aoyama discusses finding a wife, he states, "I'd like to have enough time to observe her. I'd like to see many women and then choose my ideal one" (00:11:30-00:11:44). His desire to view many women and judge them illustrates the recurring theme of men comparing and judging

women in society. His friend then offers to hold a movie casting audition with the ulterior motive of finding him a wife (00:11:59-00:12:10).

The audition sequence in the film illustrates men's objectifying attitude towards women in Japanese society and within cinema itself. Aoyama and Yoshikawa conduct the interviews in a large gymnasium-like room, where they bring in each applicant individually and place her in a chair in the middle of the room. Aoyama and Yoshikawa sit behind a desk on the other side of the room and scrutinize the women. The scene's framing reflects the gender power structure. The camera mostly films the women in the middle of a long shot with a significant amount of headspace. The framing of the women provides a contrast to the framing of Aoyama and Yoshikawa, who are filmed in medium-close shots with much less headspace. This contrast emphasizes the fact that Aoyama and Yoshikawa sit higher than the women they are interviewing and that they are significantly larger than the women. Their seemingly higher position and larger appearance visually illustrates their power over the women in the scene. Throughout the extended sequence, Yoshikawa asks questions mostly having to do with sex including, "Did you ever want to work for the sex industry?" and "We have some sex scenes. Can you handle that?" He also asks questions about the women in relation to men including, "What kind of men don't you like?" By asking sexual questions and questions about men, Yoshikawa illustrates the sexualizing of women within the film industry (00:22:41-00:25:46).

The scene continues demonstrating how film sexualizes women by reflexively filming the women through a diegetic video camera. The interview room includes a camera filming the women as Yoshikawa and Aoyama interview them. The diegetic camera frequently films sexualizing positions of the women. One applicant states that her office only made adult videos. The camera then immediately cuts to the diegetic camera filming up and down her bare legs.

Yoshikawa then instructs his assistant to "Keep her for another job," indicating that her appeal lies solely in her making sexual films. Just as Yoshikawa sexualizes these women by asking them demeaning questions, the camera sexualizes them by filming them for the male gaze, just as Mulvey discusses in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." The scene even shows an applicant remove her clothes for the camera. As she removes her brazier, exposing her breasts, the scene cuts to the footage shot from the diegetic camera, which emphasizes how film objectifies women by making them the object of the male gaze. Shortly after, an applicant describes her suicide attempts and mentions that she was admitted into an asylum three times (00:26:50-00:27:12). By juxtaposing the camera objectifying and scrutinizing women with this woman describing her suicide attempts, the scene illustrates the mental harm societal objectification and judgment causes women. Women are held to impossible expectations in their appearance because of visual media's representation women as sexualized objects lacking imperfection. This woman describing her self-harm signifies the impossibility of meeting societal expectations of beauty resulting in low self-esteem and self-loathing.

The scene shifts drastically once the female slasher, Asami, auditions. The scene stops cutting to the footage of the diegetic camera, removing the film's reflexivity. The camera angles drastically shift from the dominant male position to the dominant applicant. The frame holds Asami in the foreground while Aoyama and Yoshikawa remain in the background. In this way, the frame portrays Asami as larger. The camera then dollies forward so that the frame no longer shows Asami as she answers their questions. As Asami remains out of the view, the camera dollies forward so that the frame shows the men in the center position, which simulates Asami's perspective. The camera focuses on the men, signifying that Asami is in the position of power rather than the object of the camera's gaze. The camera then dollies closer to Aoyama, leaving

him in a medium-close, which suggests that he is the target of Asami's viewpoint. At the end of the interview, the frame shows Asami's back in the foreground and the two men smaller in the background. The frame portrays them as higher than Asami, but the frame portrays Asami as larger. She then stands, blocking most of Aoyama and Yoshikawa's bodies from view. This camerawork again signifies that she is the one in power in the situation by showing her larger and higher in frame (00:27:55-00:31:15).

Shortly after the audition, Aoyama and Asami begin dating. After they go on several dates, Aoyama takes Asami to a hotel room because he plans on asking her to marry him. Before Aoyama asks her, Asami initiates sex. They have not had sex yet at this point in the film. By initiating the sexual encounter, she subverts normative gender expectations and takes the sexual dominant role from Aoyama. She turns off the single lamp light and removes her clothes. Aoyama nervously discusses dinner options as she removes her garments while in the foreground. Aoyama remains in the background, leaving Asami significantly larger and in the position of power. As she fully rids herself of her outer garment, the camera cuts to her back with medium shot in an angle that does not show her buttocks or breasts. She is notably skinny, which is relevant for the reading of a scene later in the film. She removes her undergarments, but the camera cuts to a medium shot of her legs so that the viewer cannot see her nudity. In between cuts to various parts of Asami's body, the camera shows Aoyama's reactions. He stares at her body, but the camera angles deny the viewer access. The scene then cuts to the upper back half of her body in a medium shot, but as she turns around to get into bed, she covers her breasts with her arm, as if aware of the voyeuristic viewer. She then tells Aoyama to come to the bed. She tells him to look at her body rather than taking off his own clothes. As she removes the sheet from her body, the camera cuts to a medium shot of Aoyama staring at her body. Only her legs

remain in the frame. By telling Aoyama to stare, Asami maintains the dominant position. Aoyama removes his clothes and gets on top of her. Asami then quickly takes back the dominant position by abruptly shifting on top of him. The scene then immediately cuts to sheets quickly shifting as if Asami and Aoyama have sex, but the camera then trucks to the top of the bed to reveal that Aoyama is alone in the bed. The quick jump in scenes once Asami gets into the dominant position further shows her subversion of the male-controlled society. Rather than show an objectifying sexual sequence that would often appear in a slasher film, the film cuts just as Asami is reclaiming the dominant position. She takes over the dominant sexual position and evades the objectification of the camera. By denying the viewer access to her nudity, Asami subverts the objectifying male gaze of the slasher genre (00:55:20-01:00:11).

As the film continues, violent flashbacks and dream sequences reveal Asami killing. One such surreal sequence includes Asami's stepfather commanding her to dance for him as he approaches her with burning incense sticks. He tells her that he will torture her if she does not dance for him. When he burns her, the film cuts to the stepfather playing the piano. Asami approaches him with a piano wire from behind. She giddily wraps the wire around his neck and slowly decapitates him. As she kills him, she tells him that she has never felt happiness (01:25:57-01:28:23). Asami revolts against the societal abuse of women through killing her stepfather whose character signifies the molestation of young girls because he sexually abused Asami when she was young.

Asami further subverts the patriarchal system through her torture of an unidentified man. Throughout the film, Asami's apartment features a large, cryptic-looking bag. Toward the climax of the film, Aoyama trips over the bag, and a man with no feet and tongue crawls out (01:22:54-01:24:15). Although the film never explicitly states the man's identity, Yoshikawa informs

Aoyama earlier in the film that the music director that Asami worked for had been missing for a year (00:35:45-00:36:03). As Aoyama stares at the tortured man in the foreground of the frame, Asami coughs and vomits in the background of the frame. Asami then comes into the foreground with a large pet-feeding bowl full of her own vomit. She places the bowl in front of the man, and he promptly eats the vomit. By feeding the man her own vomit, Asami dominates him with a symbol of body dissatisfaction brought on by societal abuse of women.

Throughout the film, symbols of eating disorders and self-loathing occurs amongst the female characters. The scene in which Asami removes her clothing reveals her anorexic figure. The audition sequence includes a woman discussing her own suicide attempts. Asami states she never experienced happiness when she kills her abusive stepfather. The combination of the film's instances of self-loathing and dissatisfaction culminates in an overarching theme of women dissatisfied with themselves. This dissatisfaction juxtaposes the frequent scrutiny of women's external appearance by male characters. The judgment of women by external appearance brings about eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia, so by forcing herself to vomit into a bowl to feed him, Asami punishes the man with the result of the societal objectification of women. The man who she feeds vomit is most likely the missing music director, so he is working with the media that promotes the same expectations of women that Yoshikawa displayed during the audition sequence. The music director is complicit in the societal objectification of women that results in widespread eating disorders. As the man disgustingly gobbles down the vomit, the camera cuts to a long shot, revealing that Asami is now in her childlike form that the film shows during flashback sequences. She pats the man on the head as he continues eating (01:24:20-01:25:29). By showing Asami as a child, the scene shows that society's judgement instills the impossible expectations of women at a young age.

Asami further demonstrates her revolt by torturing Aoyama. Aoyama wakes in his apartment but cannot move. Asami, now dressed in a rubber apron and rubber gloves, approaches him with many tools. She gets on top of Aoyama in a sexually dominating position and begins cutting off his clothes with scissors. While doing this, she discusses the auditioning process. She states that men hold auditions to make women fail and trick them into having sex. By stating these observations while she cuts off his clothing, she subverts the sexist process of the audition. She overturns the conventional gender power structure represented in the male-dominated audition process by situating herself in the dominant position: sitting on top of him and non-consensually removing his clothing while Aoyama remains in the submissive position. She continues to subvert gender roles by repeatedly penetrating him with phallic needles. She inserts some of the needles into his eyes. Asami's torture tactics visually subvert the male gaze by explicitly mutilating the tools of eroticizing women: the eyes. (01:32:07-01:36:28). After using needles, Asami begins cutting off Aoyama's foot with the piano wire. As she tugs on the wire and slowly dismembers the foot, the scene crosscuts with quick images of Asami as a young child dancing ballet as her stepfather masturbates while watching her (01:38:10-01:39:00). By crosscutting these images, the scene re-emphasizes that the sexual abuse from her stepfather and her society turned her into a killer. Her violent actions towards Aoyama signify a revolt against the system that judges and dehumanizes women into sexual objects.

Jang Cheol-soo's *Bedevilled* illustrates the prevalence of sexual assault that results from rape culture and female subjugation in patriarchal societies. In the film, an island off the coast of South Korea called "Moo Doo" encapsulates South Korea's gender relations. On this island the eventual slasher figure, Bok-nam, suffers many instances of emotional and sexual abuse that leads to her murder of the residents of the island. The island's residents frequently call her an

animal; her brother-in-law, Cheol-jong, rapes her; and her husband, Man-jong, frequently beats her. She later reveals that she does not know who the father of her daughter, Yeon-hee, is because she was raped by every male occupant of the island. The residents' dehumanizing treatment of Bok-nam reflects the mistreatment of women in society.

A telling sequence for Bok-nam's abuse occurs during the rape sequence. The scene begins with Cheol-jong raping Bok-nam in a long shot. The scene then cuts to an extreme close-up of Bok-nam's breasts jostling because of the forced intercourse (00:19:16-00:19:50). The camera work parallels Cheol-jong's sexual assault, dehumanizing Bok-nam by filming her breasts just as Cheol-jong dehumanizes her through rape. The film uses slasher-genre tropes, degrading women by filming them in an explicit manner. The sexualizing film camera plays an active role in illustrating Bok-nam's eventual subversion of society's degradation of women.

The men and the camera's treatment of a prostitute in the film further reveals the sexual abuse of women by men and the film genre as a whole. During a sexual encounter with the prostitute, Man-jong simulates rape in his treatment of her. He throws her on the ground and demands for her to scream as he engages in sexual relations with her. By simulating rape, Man-jong shows that he desires rape rather than consensual sex. His desire illustrates how the men in the film desire the pain and dehumanization of women. The camera parallels Man-jong's dehumanizing behavior by shooting close-ups of the prostitute's body while concealing her face. The most notable shot features the woman's head obstructed by Man-jong's buttocks as she performs oral sex. Her breasts are visible, but her face is hidden (00:30:27-00:32:50). By dwelling on sexualized parts of the prostitute's body while obscuring her face, the camera thoroughly dehumanizes her and strips the character of her identity. The camera's treatment of women is similar to the treatment of sexual abusers on the island.

The sexist treatment of Bok-nam's daughter, Yeon-hee, further demonstrates the dehumanizing abuse of women on the island. Although she is no older than eight years, Yeon-hee is already sexualized. While doing laundry, Bok-nam discovers her daughter's panties in Man-jong's pockets. She walks into her home to find Yeon-hee covering herself with white makeup and sloppily painting her nails red, paralleling the appearance of the prostitute. Yeon-hee states that her adoptive father, Man-jong, gave it to her. Shortly after, Man-jong enters the room and splashes the red nail polish across Bok-nam's face and torso in a medium shot with Bok-nam's back facing the camera. The scene then cuts to a medium shot of Bok-nam's face and body covered in the nail polish, which mirrors Bok-nam's blood-spattered appearance later in the film (00:39:05-00:41:13). By mirroring the nail polish and the blood, the film draws connections between Bok-nam's eventual massacre and Man-jong sexualization of her and her daughter, represented by the red nail polish and its association with prostitution in the film.

Bok-nam subverts male dominance shortly after Man-jong accidentally kills Yeon-hee by shoving her into a rock. Bok-nam brutally kills the island's sexist occupants with a sickle. Her murder of Man-jong's brother, Cheol-jong, illustrates her subversion of the male sexual dominance in society and in film. Unaware of the many murders Bok-nam has already committed, Cheol-jong gropes her when she approaches him. The camera films a close-up of Cheol-jong's hand aggressively groping Bok-nam's buttocks. The camera then pans from Bok-nam's buttocks to the right, revealing Bok-nam's sickle. The scene emphasizes men's sexual aggression toward women through the close-up of Cheol-jong groping Bok-nam. By panning to Bok-nam's weapon, the scene connects her violence to the continuous sexual mistreatment of women. The pan also subverts the objectifying film camera present in the slasher genre. The camera movement shifts from sexualizing Bok-nam, as it did in earlier scenes, to empowering

Bok-nam through showing her weapon. The film utilizes the slasher genre's sexualization of women to mirror their societal mistreatment. When Bok-nam subverts the patriarchal system through killing the island's residents, the camera shifts from sexualizing her to showing her newfound empowerment against male sexual aggression. Bok-nam then slowly decapitates Cheol-jong with the sickle (01:23:33-01:24:08). By murdering Cheol-jong, she revolts against the male sexual aggression that Cheol-jong frequently committed against her.

Bok-nam continues illustrating her revolt against the patriarchy through her trickery and murder of Man-jong. Man-jong overpowers Bok-nam, ties her hands behind her back, and prepares to kill her with his knife. Bok-nam rests on her knees in a submissive position as Man-jong holds his knife close to her face. Bok-nam then apologizes to Man-jong. She sexually licks the dull side of the phallic blade. She then places her mouth around the tip of the knife, simulating oral sex. The position mirrors the submissive behavior of the prostitute towards Man-jong. Bok-nam's sexual behavior intercuts with Man-jong's flustered facial expressions and heavy breathing. Her submission arouses him. She licks up the blade until she reaches his fingers. Eased by sexual arousal, Man-jong drops the knife. Her use of submissive sexuality to unarm Man-jong illustrates her subversion of the patriarchal system. She uses sexuality to disarm Man-jong of his dominance, represented by him dropping the phallic knife. Bok-nam continues simulating oral sex through sucking Man-jong's index finger. The scene continues intercutting with Man-jong's reactions. His facial expressions suggest that he is close to orgasm. Bok-nam then denies his climax by biting down until his finger breaks. Man-jong strikes Bok-nam and attempts to grab an axe. Bok-nam grabs the handle of the knife with her mouth and stabs Man-jong's chest (01:28:46-01:31:01). The previous sequence established the phallic nature of the knife Man-jong wielded through Bok-nam's simulation of oral sex, so Bok-nam's stabbing Man-

jong with the same knife illustrates a gender reversal. Bok-nam rises to the dominant position by emasculating Man-jong with the phallus.

Bok-nam subverting male sexual dominance also subverts the slasher genre because the genre caters to men. Within the slasher genre, male viewers hold the position of sexual dominance because they objectify the women on screen. By the film shifting from objectifying Bok-nam to empowering her through her violent revolt, the male viewer loses the sexually dominant position. Laura Mulvey also discusses the castration anxiety that springs from the presence of women in films and results in women having to be the objects of the gaze (49). Now that the film no longer objectifies Bok-nam, it threatens castration anxiety for the male viewer. Bok-nam's emasculation of patriarchal society overthrows gender hegemony and further channels a sense of castration in the male viewer. Channeling castration anxiety overturns the gender hierarchy of the slasher genre because the genre builds itself upon objectifying women and the placing males in the sexually dominant position.

The rising female slasher subgenre emerging from *Dream Home*, *Audition*, and *Bedevilled* illustrates the revolt against patriarchal societies and the slasher genre's misogyny. The slasher genre's objectification of women exemplifies Laura Mulvey's study of the dichotomy between gendered roles of "gazer" and "gazed upon" in cinema. The films overturn conventional gender roles through exemplifying a female slasher subverting male sexual dominance. Moreover, Mulvey discusses avant-garde cinema subverting cinema's sexist hegemony. She states that, with new advancements in cinematic technology, the possibility of films revolting against the patriarchal construction of cinema exists (45). Although Mulvey states this possibility for cinema, she does not explain how this antithesis will take form. The East-Asian slashers exceptionally fit the rejection of the patriarchal film structure. The films subvert

the gazer role through signifiers of emasculation. From this rising alternative from cinema's misogyny, more films across various genres may also begin overthrowing the patriarchal structure of cinema that perpetuates societal sexism. Because literature and film heavily shape societal outlook, filmmakers who use cinema as a tool for social progression, rather than a tool for objectifying women, have the power to advance gender equality and help neutralize the widespread objectification of women.

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Creative Nonfiction

Stone Hendrickson

The Family Pool

We had a four-foot pool at the old house. Every May, my dad organized an entire workday dedicated to opening the pool for the summer. My older siblings and I, eight of us in all, would space ourselves equidistantly around the pool's perimeter to gain as many points of leverage as possible and begin to heave the all-encompassing tarp over one side. The water beneath the tarp sat about two-and-a-half feet high, green and stagnant. The tarp, weighed down with a smaller pool of even darker water and rotting leaves at its center, required all our efforts to tug it across the full length of the pool. A couple of my braver siblings would jump into the frigid murk for better positioning. With my dad directing from the front, we marched the tarp to a slope forty yards away, carefully maneuvering around sandboxes, slides, and flowerbeds, and leaving a narrow trail of leaves and slime that stained the newly greened grass. Strategically situated on the slope, the tarp was scrubbed, sprayed, sun-dried, folded, and put away by the eight of us.

Then my dad turned his attention to the pool. Like a witch doctor brewing arcane potions, he administered chlorine cocktails by the gallon—"shock treatment," I think he called it. Next, he connected a suction hose to the pool's pump at one end and to a long, slender blue pole at the other. Using the pole to direct the hose and brush attachment, my dad slowly, methodically vacuumed the accumulated debris from the pool's floor, like a plastic surgeon performing liposuction. Over the next week, the pool would begin to recover from the long winter sickness, its color gradually returning to a brilliant, aquatic blue. As an adult, I know that the water had no

true color. The blue came only from the color of the pool's lining on the floor and around the sides. But as a child, there was no distinction. The walls, lining, and water formed a seamless, unified whole.

In the summer, my siblings and I sought sanctuary from the broiling Oklahoma sun in the pool's water and played until our fingers and toes pruned like my grandmother's. Our games revealed the roles and hierarchy at work in the family. The more fully developed muscles of my older brothers inevitably outpaced my feeble strokes. My sisters knew which games to play and when games had run their course. They were masters of social engineering. Sister or brother, they could all outlast my lungs underwater. No bragging rights could incentivize me to endure those burning, breath-holding contests. When not holding our breath, we played noisily, of course. After all, eight siblings don't come quietly.

But no matter how loudly the voices and splashes grew, one quick duck under the water brought instant quiet. My eyes closed. I reveled in the muffled blackness. For a few seconds, I found my wet oasis.

One day, I found an opportunity to swim alone. Well, mostly alone. My oldest sister, Heidi, promised to watch me. Anyone under six had to have a sibling lifeguard. Heidi had a book which she read on the shaded part of the deck. The deck was a large, sprawling affair. The bulk of it was level with the house. French doors in the living room opened out onto four hundred square feet of splintered wooden planks. This central plaza included a large picnic table (remember, eight kids), a couple of sun chairs, and an old cat bringing half-chewed birds to the doorstep. In one corner of the central deck, a small gate barred the way to a series of smaller decks that curved around a flower bed next to the pool while gradually descending, each successive platform a step or two below the previous one. On the highest of these platforms,

there was a bench used to store pool equipment. The bench was rarely opened. We didn't have much use for life jackets in a four-foot pool, and all of the necessary noodles and floating beds had a nearly permanent residence floating on the surface of the pool during the summer months. As a result, the contents of the bench were covered with spider webs and dirt. We usually left the lid closed. The bench was useful for sitting. My parents sat there to watch us swim without getting wet themselves. The bench was about fifteen feet from the edge of the pool and a few feet above the surface. It was close enough to participate in the energy erupting from the water but far enough away to avoid the truly disruptive aspects of the swimming experience. This is where my sister sat.

I played by myself in the pool. An introverted child, my time in the pool alone brought a savory pleasure that I could consume slowly, thoughtfully relishing each new source of imaginative play as it came to me. Without a posse of older siblings, I relied on imagination to access the potential energy lurking in the soft undulations of the methodically filtered water. My imaginings relied on the flower bed separating the pool from the upper deck. Heroes voyaged and traveled from sea to forest and back again accomplishing the great deeds that I daydreamed for them. Playing at that end of the pool also provided additional privacy. I was immediately below the upper deck and so could not been seen from the French doors of the house. There were also three large shrubs partially hiding me from the view of the storage bench next to the gate. Enclosed by the deck and the shrubs, I had space for my mind to wander from water to plants.

She screamed when she saw me. My body was floating. Paralyzed with shock, Heidi's only response was to vocalize her dread. Fear, disbelief, guilt felt too early, all produced one horrific shriek. Dad leapt off the mower and came running, parental instincts howling the worst.

Meanwhile, my body floated, half entombed in water, half exposed to the sun. This time, there had been no one to count how long my face stayed under water. Dad dived in, ripped my body out of the pool, and plopped it onto the deck. Desperately, he tried to pump water out of my lungs. There was no response. His limited CPR techniques exhausted, there was nothing left to do except wait for the ambulance. My father is an active, goal-oriented man. His drive to finish, to complete, to resolve never fails. It carried him up the management ladder in the IT department of his utilities company. It compelled him to spend years of Saturdays and evenings shaping three acres of Oklahoma red clay into grassy lawns and lush gardens. But in that moment, he was powerless. The drive within him ran into the unmoving wall of inexperience and incapability.

The ambulance eventually arrived with its screaming sirens. I couldn't hear them. The water, sloshing inside my gut and lungs, somehow still enveloped me in dark silence. I was in the pool; the pool was in me—a horrifying meditation on immersion.

I continued unconscious at the hospital for hours. The doctor, having survived a near-drowning experience himself, explained that the most likely outcomes were bleak but that there was hope. I might survive. I might even regain consciousness. But if I did, I would probably exist in a semi-vegetative state, drooling. That was how these cases usually ended. I would most likely end that way.

I sometimes picture myself slouched in a wheelchair, emitting a low moan and spilling spit out the side of my mouth. People would notice me, wonder why I was the way I was. I imagine my moan humming in the background of the pastor's sermon—my voice heard by all but acknowledged by none. In Walmart, they would look at me, catching themselves a moment too late and redirecting their gaze. ("Who sinned, this man or his parents?") Needless to say, the image disturbs me.

A thin, steady stream of slobber was the best my parents could hope for. I, of course, hoped nothing at the time. I was the object of all hopes, the subject of nothing. Without my consciousness, I had no means by which to exist as a personal being with my own wishes. Instead, I offered a repository for the doctor's efforts and my community's hopes and prayers. Thoughts and desires pooled around my body that was so full of water yet empty of spirit.

As it happened, my parents got more than a little saliva. While lying in the hospital after hours of unconsciousness, my eyes suddenly snapped open. "Mom!" I cried and promptly vomited all over her. While my mother was temporarily paralyzed with shock and joy, the nurses rushed into the room, assuring her that the vomit was a sure sign of life. My body was finally ejecting the pool water and returning to normalcy. I emerged from the pool, from the doctor's prognosis, from my parents' nightmares, unscathed. No drool. No damage.

I also have no memory of my near drowning. I remember absolutely nothing about the experience. I know the story well because my mother has told it so many times, often with additions and confirmations from my siblings and grandmother. This bothers me. In a sense, this experience was perhaps the most critical of my life. Yet, I would never have known it happened were it not for my mother's stories. Each telling is slightly different from the last. Sometimes, I'm five years old. Sometimes I'm three. Sometimes Heidi and Lacey are watching me. Sometimes my grandmother makes it to the hospital before my mom.

The story makes a regular appearance when visitors come to the house. Family friends, neighbors, girlfriends, and boyfriends often hear the story. "We've been thinking about putting a pool in," offers Sid. He and his wife teach a Sunday school class with my parents. "But we're just a little concerned about grandkids someday. I mean it would be great for them, but it's just

kinda scary, you know?" adds Rebekah. "Well, you know about Stone, don't you?" my mom responds. Her eyes would look vacuous except for that slight hardening of the wrinkles around them and the ominous content of the question. "No." Eyes shift toward me and quickly back to my mom as they await the sequel. "He actually drowned, well, he had a near drowning in our pool at our old house."

The story proceeds. It might be more or less detailed depending on the relative closeness of our relationship to the guests. As good friends, Sid and Rebekah get most of the details. A neighbor or acquaintance might only get a few. Meanwhile, I sit and listen again. I do not know what to do. The narrative circles around me, but it is not about me. The story is about my body. Yes, I nearly drowned. But at a certain point in that process of drowning/not-drowning, I lost the "me." The details of the traumatic incident circle in a swirling whirlpool—an enormous amount of energy focused on a central point of . . . nothing. Without my own memory, I cannot contribute anything of my own to the telling. If I add something, I feel a little guilty, as if one of my siblings might accuse me of telling their detail. So I usually remain passive and quiet. I provide the focal point around which my family can pool their experiences of one summer day at the old house.

Poetry

Ryan Lally

Mindless Work

It has to be unceasing:
stacking pennies into towers of ten,
crushing cardboard boxes into trash cans,
scraping out earwax with a hairpin.
It has to be
repetitive: like thank you notes and arguments,
or thumbing up a Facebook feed.
It has to
erase the limits of your patience
and grip both hands
of a winding clock.
It has
to be in motion:
fluttering papers and pulsating heartbeats, or
The ringing in your ears that you hear
when it's silent. Then, work
for the moments when all the neurons stop firing
and hands and feet steady their pace.
The body is a mechanism—everything
Bolted together.

Ryan Lally

Washing Dishes with Oedipus

Things have piled up
and so I must empty them. Empty:
a word like the paper skin on overcooked eggs,
the sordid expression of a life precariously stacked, or scrambled.
And so the sink spills water like stained glass at nighttime,
refracting the muddy colors welled up in the dark.
The sink is overfilled and water splashes to the ground—
a wet stain swells along the tips of my feet. *Swollen feet*. I thought
his name and here he is, brought to the gritted edges of a mixing bowl
battered with some eggy mixture. What a shame
to find him here.

Wedging the plates out of a stack,
I wonder how long it would take a cockroach to find this place,
scuttle along the Walmart china
and the rough edges of fork tines and blunt knives and
the enigma of silverware, its bantam feet
scrupulous and gorging on this kingdom—*enough of this*.
I am getting sick. I rinse my hands until they thin and wrinkle.
He has stained
strands of blood decorating his scars
as if a child painted two red suns.
Oedipus, you look so old now.

An hour later, a rag is hanging over the swan-necked spout
and the dishes are perspiring in a cabinet.
I'll count the clean plates for you, like they're dead
men absolved, for a few days, for happiness.
I guess the food is sympathetic—
I scoop the cloudy pulp
layering the sink into the disposal and
it all dives down the drain. A switch goes on,
it thuds and thins
until the house swallows it.

Do not worry, there's nothing to see but an empty drain.
On the counter, I notice a spoon I forgot to wash.
Coagulated cheddar pinches the bowed belly of its handle—

I rub its empty bowl under the faucet and in its reflection
I am upside down; I hardly recognize my chin hanging off my neck.
What a waste—all this vision for an empty sink.
The towel is sopping
up my fingers and glossing dried specks of food
off my skin. *What a waste*.

If you are here to be washed, you are out of place.
Oh Oedipus, I see you
are in pain. You want answers. Well,
I'll tell you all things, my king,
I'll tell you all stories, infinitely round, like plates and spoons, or eyes.
I'll tell you that the traps in the wilderness are
there because you put them there. I'll tell you
the last illusion we die with is that there is any safety in domestic repetition.
I'll give five riddles for any question—
but you want concision. Stacked and dry answers. So, fine:
I can't make you happy. I can't
bleach your stains out. But I can, at least,
Stop looking at dirty dishes.

Creative Nonfiction

Caleb Punt

Prozac

The first thing you need to know is that my dad is almost completely tone-deaf. We are approaching the fifth hour of the daylong drive from our house in Orlando to my aunt's place in Huntsville. We make this drive probably three times a year, and we have all settled into our established routines. My dad, in a surviving vestige from his conservative upbringing, insists on driving the entire way. My mom sits next to him, reading a bargain romance on her Kindle, her feet up on the dash board except when Dad motions them down, needing to change lanes. Mike, my eighteen-year-old brother, and I sit in the two middle seats. Mike is buried in whatever overly intellectual book he is into at the moment; his notebook, filled with his scrawled cursive, sits balanced between the window and his left knee. ("If you don't keep notes, you will simply forget what you've read, and that's a waste of time," he says.) I'm staring out the window, the Cormac McCarthy novel in my lap momentarily neglected for the grassy hills of central Georgia. Danny, the fourteen-year-old baby of the family, has set up camp in the back row of the van. He lays sprawled out across the bench seat, face down with a light blanket and a Calvin and Hobbes comic book covering his head.

As the fifth hour of driving comes to a close, my dad starts fidgeting in his seat. Over the course of the morning and early afternoon, he has exhausted his stash of pharmaceutical podcasts and conservative talk shows. His attempts to start a lively conversation have been met with mere grunts from his otherwise entertained sons, and friendly but pithy responses from his book-enthralled wife. So the white ear buds go in, and Dad turns to his old friend Mr. Huey Lewis for

some mid-road trip entertainment. Every one of us knows what comes next. As soon as Mike glances at the rear-view mirror and sees Dad tapping the steering wheel in time to the upbeat drum intro, Bose noise-canceling headphones snap down over his ears. Danny sandwiches his head between a pillow and returns to his state of disheveled lethargy. Thirty seconds later, the instrumental opening has ended and Dad belts out, "SOmETimeS IN MY BeD At NIghT, I CUrsE The DARkNESs ANd I prAY FOR THE LIghT! BUT SOMEtimES THE LigHTS NO COnsoLATIoN!"

The actual words are the only commonality between whatever is coming out of my Dad's mouth and Mr. Lewis's original rock and roll hit. My Dad's vocal cords only afford him about a four-note range, but he has learned to compensate by modulating the key at seemingly random intervals. Sam lets out a soft groan and clamps the pillow tighter to his head. When Dad hits the chorus, ("WALkinG oN a ThiN LINe! ANGRY alL TiME!"), my mom gives an exasperated but affectionate laugh and swats at him with her free hand. I happen to be a fan of Huey so I decide to embrace the situation. When the second verse comes around, I add my maybe six-note range to Dad's monotone warbling, and we produce a truly horrendous harmony, singing "TAUGHT ME HOW TO SHOOT THE KILL" and miming a gunshot at exactly the right moment to match the soundtrack. Apparently, the combination of our voices overwhelms the noise canceling capabilities of both Bose headphones and twice-folded cotton pillows; Mike and Danny simultaneously protest loudly. I grin and return to my book. Dad reluctantly quiets down and goes back to tapping his fingers—until about a half hour later when the Heart of Rock and Roll overcomes him again.

The second thing you need to know is that Prozac is a powerful antidepressant drug. Its generic form, Fluoxetine, was created in 1972 and was approved for medical use a couple years

later. Since then, Prozac has been used to treat a variety of mental illnesses: depression, anxiety disorders, bulimia, and even OCD. Its list of side-effects is as long as any other drug you can find; commercials usually end with around twenty seconds of a cheery voice listing things like "abnormal dreams, diarrhea, and dry mouth" while a woman walks smiling through a lily field.

Despite these potential side-effects, Prozac plays an absolutely vital role in the lives of thousands of people. When we think of the effect of drugs on a person's brain, we normally assume that they put a person into an altered mental state. Think of your fifth grade D.A.R.E class, "This is your brain. This is your brain on crack." We assume that a person is normal, or is himself or herself, when he or she is not on drugs; drugs turn you into something else. But for people with clinical anxiety and depression, the opposite is true. In their default, or natural state, these people are completely unable to function, victims of chemical imbalances in their brains and faulty neurotransmitters. These people are unable to be normal—to be truly themselves— without chemical assistance. Prozac, in these cases, reveals their genuine personality, their genuine outlook, their genuine selves.

The last thing you need to know is that last summer, my Dad, in a brave attempt at self-reliance, stopped taking Prozac for the first time since he was twenty years old. Years of research had given him hope that a carefully constructed diet could give him a natural, side-effect-free remedy to the clinical anxiety and depression that he has struggled with for the entirety of his adult life. It didn't work.

I walk into the kitchen from the garage after a tiring day at my summer job. Nike, our perpetually hyper cocker spaniel, jumps against my legs, waving his pathetic little stub of a tail as fast as he possibly can. I squat down, making loud cooing sounds, rubbing his little head between my hands, and playfully shoving him around until he gets bored. I see my mom sitting

at the kitchen counter, one of her books in hand, and I plop down next to her. She looks up smiling, and starts to fix me some dinner as she asks about my day. We make pleasant, everyday conversation. But the chitchat has a strained, artificial quality. We take turns catching each other glancing at the clock.

At 7:15 the door from the garage opens again and my dad slowly walks in. My mom and I go momentarily silent as we realize that it has been what my family refers to in whispered asides as simply "a bad day." My dad's face is gaunt, with red splotches beneath his eyes, and a strange shimmer within them. His Bay and Lake Pharmacy polo hangs loosely; he has lost nearly twenty-five pounds over the past three weeks and his 150 pound 6'2'' frame has a skeletal look to it. But it is his voice that confirms that is has been a "bad day." As Nike leaps into his greeting ritual, Dad gently pushes him off with his knee and whispers a pained, barely perceptible "Shh, Nike, shh." My mom asks him how his day was. He doesn't respond, his face still downturned at the rebuffed puppy. It is as if my mom's words are delayed, slowly traveling through the swirling clouds of anxiety surrounding my dad's brain. Eventually he looks up and manages a "fine." He slowly walks towards the La-Z-Boy that sits where our dining area meets the living room. Waves of purposeless adrenaline force him down into the chair and his head falls into his hands. He bravely bears twenty-five to thirty minutes in the common area as my mom and I attempt to manufacture normal family conversation. But soon he whispers a half-thought-out excuse and retreats to his bedroom. We glance at the clock again. It's 7:53.

It is days like today where Dad's anxiety and depression seem to create a dark, palpable presence. This presence is waiting for my dad as soon as wakes up. It follows him into his red Honda Civic, down Lakeshore Drive to Bay Pharmacy, and grows thicker and larger throughout the day as his chemically warped perception of life sends his mind to darker and darker places. I

start to feel it as he drives for home, turning down Dead River Road a quarter of a mile from our house; it hovers in and around his car, hunching his shoulders over the steering wheel and giving his eyes that wet shimmer. It seeps through the doorway as soon as he walks into the kitchen, immediately extinguishing the little campfire my mom's genial conversation had created. For the next half-hour we live in the midst of it. It has a muting, discoloring effect. When Dad retreats for the day, it follows him and pools in the exterior, isolated rooms of the house, driving both of my brothers out of their bedrooms and into the common living area. We sit around the kitchen table. My mom starts to absentmindedly sing REO Speedwagon as she does the dishes.

Poetry

Hannah Warrick

Requiem for Our 10th

Glasgow rain has never fallen so greatly
as now, yet not enough to cleanse the infectious wounds that fester
within us. Like stubborn lung cancer patients rejecting chemo,
we inhale smoke anyway, eyes rolled into our heads, and eventually exhale
fumes filled with some sticky, residual memory
of a time less riddled with this unarticulated anathema.
Still, there is no point in placing a Band-Aid
over a malignant tumor, a bullet wound, or worse—
over years of dreading dinners, vacations, and anniversaries.
So instead, I suture my secrets deeper and give you
a biopsy of bone. You give me
severed synapses, fragments of you
unfamiliar, unreadable, and underwhelming.
Our words work no wonders. Our disease lacks a diagnosis
and our love an antidote.

Contributors

Lindsey Brodt is a senior English major from Mandeville, LA. Her favorite literary works include Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle*, Betty Smith's *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, and Raymond Carver's collected short stories *Where I'm Calling From*.

Dr. David Chapman is Professor of English. He is finishing his first year in the English department after leaving the Dean's office. He advises the John Howard Scholars, a group of outstanding students who continue the work of the eighteenth-century prison reformer.

Claire Davis is a sophomore University Fellow from Birmingham, AL, studying English and Classics. After graduation, she plans to go into editing, but for the time being she is happy serving as the communications coordinator for the Samford Traditions and Oral History Recording Initiative.

Lauren Engle is a first-year student double majoring in English and Political Science. She is from Charlotte, NC, and is excited to continue pursuing her love for writing and politics while here at Samford.

Stone Hendrickson is a senior University Fellow double majoring in English and Classics. He serves as the General Editor of the *Samford Undergraduate Research Journal* and as an SGA Senator. He will be attending the University of Alabama School of Law in the fall.

Ryan Lally is a Junior University Fellow majoring in English with a Concentration in Creative Writing. Originally from the Chicago area, he currently resides in Killen, AL.

Emily London is a sophomore University Fellow double majoring in English and Classics. She enjoys baking and wishing she resided in her namesake city. She has a particular research interest in exploring non-Western identities in ancient Greek and Roman cultures.

Margaret Mason is a senior English major and University Fellow from Columbus, GA, who is amazed by grace. She loves channeling her inner Elizabeth Bennet by spending a majority of her time outdoors with a book (preferably written by an Inkling) and hot tea in hand. Upon graduation, she plans to pursue a career in College Admissions.

Jud Potter is a senior majoring in English with a Concentration in Film Studies. He plans to edit film and video in Atlanta and hopes one day to edit your next favorite movie.

Caleb Punt is a senior University Fellow double majoring in English and Religion. He will pursue a Masters in Divinity at Duke University starting in the fall.

Hudson Reynolds is a senior majoring in English with a Concentration in Film Studies. He plans to work as a contract tutor while pursuing opportunities in videography. Long-term plans are to pursue a position in Video Production.

Margaret Schultz is a junior History major, English minor, and University Fellow from Austin, TX. She has always loved history and literature and hopes to continue combining them in her studies in the future.

Hannah Warrick is an English major with a Concentration in Creative Writing and minors in French and Fine Arts. After graduation, Hannah hopes to publish and edit creative works and become a freelance illustrator. She hails from Knoxville, TN.

Emily Youree is a sophomore University Fellow from Madison, AL, studying English, Classics, and Business. When not studying, she enjoys reading Charlotte Bronte and C.S. Lewis, drinking tea, and wishing she were in England.