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Just a Taste: The Cannibal versus The Vampire in Society, Film, and Literature

Luke Barnwell, University of West Georgia

"A census taker tried to quantify me once. I ate his liver with some fava beans and a big Amarone."

—Hannibal Lecter, *The Silence of the Lambs*

In 2003, the American Film Institute (AFI) polled roughly 1500 individuals about their opinions on the greatest screen villains in cinematic history (Schutt 1). Out of the countless options, those polled highlighted a certain cannibal psychologist as one of the most frightening villains to ever grace the screen. That man, Dr. Hannibal Lecter, is an adaptation of Dr. Lecter in Thomas Harris's novel *The Silence of the Lambs*. Though Lecter begins as a secondary antagonist, the film focuses on FBI Academy student Clarice Starling's rise through the ranks and her search to track down the film's "true" antagonist, Buffalo Bill. Regardless of the film's initial plotlines, the subject of cannibalism plays a significant role in unnerving those who watch the film. Yet, one may wonder why the act of cannibalism makes Dr. Lecter one of the most disturbing villains to grace the screen.

Regardless of how a cannibal is viewed, one form of cannibalism brings a unified acceptance to cinematic audiences and the general population alike: vampirism. The vampire, otherwise seen as the cannibal's aesthetically pleasing and supernatural cousin, draws a young adult following in the form of multiple shows, films, and books with monumental success. Examples are plentiful. For instance, *Twilight* (2008)*, True Blood* (2008–2014)*, Interview with a Vampire* (1994), and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2001) all portray seductive vampires as characters much more tolerable than the cannibal. These four films or series manipulate the horror figure and transform it

into a broody and misguided individual who attempts to live normally among humans. This modern overhaul created by young adult authors and screenwriters provides the vampire images young adults know today, such as Edward Cullen (*Twilight,* 2008–2012) or Stefan Salvatore (*Vampire Diaries,* 2009–2017). Vampire scholar Laura Wright describes *Twilight* and the modern construct the franchise helped create, writing, "Meyer's rewriting of vampire mythology strips vampires of their characteristic darkness and countercultural natures; these vampires like humans and want to be like them, so much so that they ascribe to a human dietary code and consume what most humans … consume, a diet centered around the bodies of animals" (354). Wright's dissection of the modern vampire provides the basis for a simple claim: the modern vampire is a simple-minded individual who struggles with the same internal battles of assimilation, dietary habits, and the constant battle of what is right versus wrong just as the human population does. In modern terms, the vampire is misunderstood and struggles to cope with the unfortunate hand dealt to them, and as a result, is not meant to be feared, but rather to be given sympathy. Here I must claim the same for the cannibal. Just as the vampire struggles, the cannibal finds the same dilemma. The cannibal, too, must keep a strict diet by repressing an urge for human flesh while maintaining a normal place in society and often finding uncertainty in being misunderstood. Regardless of the vampire and cannibal's intersections of interest, the modern vampire does not come close to the polarizing figure of the cannibal. Moreover, the question still lingers: how can American society fear the cannibal, yet aestheticize the vampire who participates in the same practices?

My claims lie within the intersections of the aforementioned terms "cannibalism" and "vampirism" in the French-Belgian horror *Raw* (2016) and *Twilight* (2008–2014). Despite the differences in genre, audience, and language between the two, these films both portray the female coming of age story, but do so in a way that not only suits the cannibal (*Raw*) and the vampire (*Twilight*), but also connects the two through numerous parallel scenes, likenesses in narrative, and a relationship between cannibals and vampires. In particular, I posit two assertions: cannibals and vampires are synonymous with one another based upon their shared consumption methods, societal abnormality, and possible psychological disorders. The films portray the constructs of cannibalism and vampirism as different distinct aspects of madness that bend and intertwine yet are dependent on gender, sexual preferences, or familial upbringings. These claims are supported by several case studies, film studies, and an analysis of individuals who have attempted cannibalism to mimic the same transfer of power or energy as the vampire.

The fascination with serial killings, death, and the obscene stems from many childhood stories. Murder is unavoidable in everything we consume

in our daily lives. From the Bible, cinema, television, video games, and social media, death is "all the rage" according to Louis Rene Beres, professor of political science at Purdue University. In a *Chicago Tribune* article titled "Our Culture Has an Abnormal Fascination with Death," Beres writes:

> We reel after each dreadfully recurrent school killing. But why should we be surprised? Just look around the country at any moment in any direction. We will notice at once that crime and murder are taking a distinctly peculiar turn. Whether it be in the movies, in music, on television, or on the streets, death—especially if it is manifestly brutish, macabre and perverse—is all the rage.

This fascination with death provides a representation for America's love for serial killings. Individuals like Ted Bundy, John Wayne Gacy, and Charles Manson become household names through films, online forums, and other forms of media. These crazed individuals receive praise, attention, and an unsettling following from the general population. We replace horror with fascination, therefore delegitimizing the crime entirely. Contrarily, the consumption of another human strikes the horror a typical serial killer may lack. It is, however, worth stating that the following names of cannibals are not as noteworthy as the three previously mentioned outside of the most famous case. The cannibals Jeffrey Dahmer, Issei Sagawa, and Countess Elizabeth Bathory not only betray humanity by murdering countless individuals, but also push humanity's boundaries by eating their victims. Regardless of the slaughter these individuals have committed, a single claim remains: modern American society creates an odd fascination with murder and those who commit it yet draw a firm line when one human consumes another.

Due to this fascination, an odd crop of small online shops seemingly exists to commemorate these aforementioned murderers. In a foreword by Diane Diamond in criminology professor David A. Bonn's *Why We Love Serial Killers: The Curious Appeal of the World's Most Savage Murderers*, Diamond claims the American captivation with the most unforgivable crimes originates from the media's intense study of these individuals; simply put, we never seem to forget the names of the infamous while the victims are quickly forgotten and cast away. Diamond writes:

> All the publicity and public interest in these repeat murders has created a mom-and-pop group of Internet based memorabilia dealers. Selling everything from serial killers' clothing, letters, locks of hair, and artwork to autographs, action figures, or even soil from the scenes of their crimes … [the fact that these vendors] make

a living selling these items speaks volumes about our collective fascination with serial killers. (VII)

The mere creation of memorabilia commemorating the horrible acts of these troubled individuals highlights the aesthetic of murder in the United States. Countless crime shows, films, and books exist simply because murder sells on the entertainment market. The fascination beckons beyond entertainment purposes by somehow tapping into the dark individual fantasies one may have, the desire to dive into the warped mind of one of these individuals, or the sheer opportunity to follow the mystery as it unfolds. We hang onto every criminal idiosyncrasy, starving for any small aspect that makes them unique. Diamond highlights the desire to give "cute names" to these real killers—the Zodiac Killer, Golden Gate Killer, "The Killer Clown" John Wayne Gacy—that "have little to do with the … ghastly actions of someone who kills over and over again" (VII). No matter how one views these individuals, there is a distinction in the perception of a serial killer versus a serial killer that is *also* a cannibal. A few months after the release of *The Silence of the Lambs* in theatres, authorities arrested Jeffrey Dahmer at the height of his crime spree. Shortly after his capture on August 12, 1991, *People* magazine published an article titled "Jeffrey Dahmer: Man or Monster?" that reads, "[Dahmer] was a quiet man who worked in a chocolate factory. But at home in apartment 213, a real-life *Silence of the Lambs* was unfolding" (Chin). At the height of the cultural impact of *Silence of the Lambs,* media sought to connect the fictional Hannibal Lecter's actions with Dahmer's real actions. American media outlets pushed the terms "evil" (Sherill) or "monster" (Chin) on Dahmer to alienate him from the typical madman, therefore dehumanizing the convicted serial killer. Dahmer was no longer a man, but an evil monster. Bonn interprets why the media pushes a clear distinction between a "normal" serial killer versus the cannibal killer. He writes:

> By linking him to Hannibal Lecter, the news media dehumanized Jeffrey Dahmer and framed him as a stylized super predator and cannibal … after Dahmer was beaten to death in prison by a fellow inmate the cover of *People* magazine referred to his demise as the "Death of a Madman." (174)

The use of terms such as "super predator," "cannibal," and "madman," all play vital parts in understanding the cannibal's role in society. The terms provide an insight into the media's outlook on cannibalistic serial killers, which establishes two groups—those who kill in a typical fashion and those who cannibalize.

Due to the taboo placed on the latter category in particular, the cannibal's acceptance into society is far behind any normal serial killer, let alone a fictitious vampire. This exact intersectionality between all three groups beckons examination. Consider the victimology of most general male serial killings. Eric W. Hickey, the dean of the California School of Forensic Sciences, breaks down the percentages of serial murder in stranger-to-stranger violence in his book *Serial Murderers and Their Victims*. Hickey highlights women as a particular group of individuals who are prone to serial violence. He explains: "Young females, especially if they were alone, ranked the highest in general preference of offenders … Hitchhikers, students walking alone, women living alone or seeking employment, and women engaged in certain professions (such as nurses, models, and waitresses) sometimes or frequently increased their chances of being victimized" (207). Comparatively, we must examine the modern vampire's young female target audience. In "(Un)safe Sex: Romancing the Vampire," modern vampire scholar Karen Backstein claims the female-center narrative is the source of the following. She writes that "[The female] is the focus of the story, whether she's narrating it (*Twilight*) or is the active visual center of the screen image (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer, True Blood*)" (38). In the case of modern vampire fiction, the female is no longer just a victim like most serial killer or cannibal cases, but rather the focus of the narrative. Instead of acting as just another name on the list, the female protagonist *is* the name on the list. We remember the "victims" in vampire horror versus those of cinematic or actual horror because of their places in the narrative. We replace the dangers of reality with the wonders of the supernatural, yet we still fall short of the acknowledgment of the shared connection between serial killers, cannibals, and vampires.

To better understand the connection between vampirism and cannibalism, one must distinguish the several types of cannibalism. In a 2016 article responding to his own quotes in *Real Crime Magazine*, Dr. Mark Griffiths asserts there are only seven possible reasons for one to resort to cannibalism: necessity for survival, control of population size, religious belief, grief, tribal warfare, or sexual gratification (1). It is from these seven reasons that the United States, like many other modernized civilizations, deems cannibalism as an evil act. Even in extreme survival examples such as The Donner Party, Uruguayan Air Force Flight 571, and the Jamestown case of 1609, the idea of consuming human flesh is farfetched. Regardless of the situation, cannibalism remains a polarizing topic.

Before analyzing primary texts, several previously mentioned serial killers—including cannibals and true vampires—are worth dissecting. Beginning with one of the most horrific serial killers in recent history, the story of Jeffrey Dahmer highlights the psychotic episodes that most associate

with cannibalism. After a childhood fascination with death, the developing divorce of his parents, and extreme isolation due to the Dahmer parents leaving Jeffery for days at a time, Jeffery sought companionship in any way he could. In the summer of 1978, Dahmer went searching to fill the void left by his parents. He wanted company. To him, anyone would do. Dahmer picked up an unlucky hitchhiker, Stephen Hicks (19), and took the man back to the Dahmer family home. The pair drank, told life stories, and enjoyed the company of one another; however, when Hicks decided it was time to leave, Dahmer reacted violently, hoping his newfound friend would stay a little longer. Dahmer then struck Hicks in the head with a dumbbell and strangled the remaining life from the man. Criminologist Nigel Cawthorne highlights Dahmer's eternal emotional starvation as the beginning of a grim fascination with dictating life and death. In *Serial Killers and Mass Murderers: Profiles of the World's Most Barbaric Criminals*, Cawthorne highlights Dahmer's cycles of murder. Cawthorne writes of "sex, companionship, and death" as equal parts in Dahmer's psyche (232). Yet, these three traits never proved to be enough for Dahmer, who eventually opted to "[eat] their flesh because that way they would be a part of him forever" (230). Often, Dahmer combined sex and death, but it was not until later in his murderous career that he opted to consume his victims. From Dahmer's case, there is a clear link between cannibalism and the sexual gratification that many killers like Dahmer experience in truly controlling their victims.

The second case of cannibalism provides a deeper analysis into the sexual gratification Dahmer received in consuming his victims. Issei Sagawa, a Japanese exchange student to Paris in 1981, murdered his Dutch exchange student girlfriend named Renée Hartevelt in her apartment. Criminal psychologist Priscilla L. Walton uses identical phrasing to describe Sagawa's act in contrast to that of Dahmer. The term "possession" returns, furthering the simple notion that a cannibal eats to "possess" the victim forever. Following the murder Sagawa cut six kilograms of meat from Hartevelt's body, bagged the meat into labeled sealed bags, and photographed his work. As Sagawa attempted to dump the body in a trash bag, a local passerby was suspicious of the bag's contents. The passerby notified police, and a short time later, Sagawa admitted all to French authorities. Much like Dahmer, Sagawa went on to become a minor celebrity in his respective country. After a brief stint in a mental institution, Sagawa went on to write *In the Fog* that details every moment before and after the murder as well as vivid details regarding the consumption of the flesh.

The third case of human consumption is much older than the aforementioned serial killers. From 1570–1610, Elizabeth Bathory (Erzebet Bathory in her native Hungaria), nicknamed "The Blood Countess," murdered numerous individuals on any whim possible. The countess picked

on mostly young and poor women who could disappear without much consideration from the public. Bathory tortured abducted women, servants, and any other victim she could find. English linguist Tony Thorne claims that Bathory's consumption of human flesh and love for blood baths were a means to maintain her beauty and youth. Much like the cannibals listed above, Bathory's choice to consume human flesh is a direct link to the desire to "absorb" energy or "preserve" the victims as a part of the killings. In *Serial Killers: Horrifying True-Life Cases of Pure Evil*, criminologist Charlotte Greig highlights Bathory's life as a serial killer as a combination of myth and reality. Greig writes: "Bathory was said to be a vampire; her murderous exploits are part history part myth" (12.1). Although there may be some myth associated with Bathory, plenty of truth remains. Through the gruesome details of multiple killings and her eventual jailing, her vile techniques solidified her as one of the first to reach the intersection between cannibal and vampire.

Now, one must question, what makes Bathory a vampire as described by Greig instead of a "normal" cannibal as the previous men? In the cases of Dahmer and Sagawa, little separates the act of cannibalism versus that of vampirism. Despite not explicitly being called a vampire, Dahmer consumed sexual and nutritional energy, therefore participating in characteristically activity during his cannibalism. Sagawa stated he wanted to "absorb" the qualities of beauty and height from Hartevelt. Yet, these two men are not considered the stereotypical vampire as Bathory is. Greig comments on this difference of perception, writing that "[t]he psychology of their bizarre blood-drinking ritual is complex, but as with the cannibal killers, it horrifies us, for here we see the breaking of another deep, ancient human taboo" (13.1). There is almost no difference in the rituals. The gain of energy is parallel, the taboo is identical, and the choice of prey follows similar paths; however, the singular difference between the two is the public acceptance of the two parties by citizens and audiences. In "(Un)Safe Sex: Romancing the Vampire," Karen Backstein writes: "across every medium … that particular type of vampire who serves as the narrative's male lead and the heroine's love interest—has transformed into a alluring combination of danger and sensitivity … a handsome romantic hero haunted by his lust for blood and his guilt for the humans he killed in the past" (38). In contrast, the difficulty in aestheticizing the cannibal is highlighted in Backstein's claim. The cannibal seldom can be an "alluring combination of danger and sensitivity" or ever possess a "[haunting for] his lust for blood and guilt for the human he killed in the past" for the killer possesses little remorse for his or her victim. Despite the cannibal and vampire's mirroring rituals, the minute differences between the modern vampire and cannibal prohibit society from ever viewing them as related in any way.

In contrast to the cannibal, the vampire exists in a world that deems it pleasing. At first glance, the negative connotation the former term has against the latter is clear to see. As an example, I will highlight a portion from a cannibal text versus that of a vampire text. In James Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, an esteemed trading-post expert, Mr. Kurtz, is transformed into a "savage" by the African tribes surrounding the post. Conrad's first-person narrator, Charles Marlowe, explains:

> The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us—who could tell? We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse. We could not understand because we were too far and could not remember because we were travelling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign—and no memories. (47)

From the excerpt, I would like to underscore the term "prehistoric men." The term is likely used for lack of a better one to describe the sights Marlowe attempts to digest, but it draws an almost eerie portrayal of anyone different to the white male protagonist. Much like Marlowe's arrival in a "New World," the infamous Christopher Columbus's "discovery" of the Americas brought a similar portrayal of the natives of the area. Perhaps to create fear and a desire to return back to the explorer's place of departure, Columbus's native guides told stories of tribes that fed on human flesh, which as a result, led Columbus to coin his version of the term "prehistoric" by calling the natives "cannibals" (Burke 1). Based on the text, the endless thought of being consumed by these "prehistoric" men creates a twisted fantasy that grants the native tribes a powerful advantage against the colonizers. Contrarily, the vampire's identical method of consumption beckons aesthetic celebration from Gothic, Romantic, and modern era audiences despite little difference separating the vampire from the cannibal.

Cinema's portrayal of the respective modern cannibal and vampire produce the same polarizing distinctions serial murderers have versus cannibals. Though it may seem as if *Raw* and *Twilight* have little in common, numerous connections exist between the cannibal's and the vampire's respective rises to power. Beginning with *Raw*, the opening scene takes place in the assumed French countryside. A figure walks casually down a single-lane highway. The figure, which we will name "The Consumer," is ominous, yet average in stature. The camera cuts to a passing car driving down the highway, then back to the original shot, but The Consumer is nowhere to be found. The car continues, then The Consumer jumps into its path, forcing the car to

swerve into a tree adjacent to the road. The driver dies on impact, leaving The Consumer to do whatever it pleases. Much like the hunting of animals, murderers hunt to fulfill a need for control. In an interview with A&E, retired FBI profiler Dr. Mary Ellen O'Toole claims victim selection is "a combination of [what is] available … accessible … and desirable" (Janos). The Consumer follows the same selection template. In the opening scene, the victim—or food—is readily available and accessible for The Consumer. With little effort, it selects a victim, murders it in an apparent accident, and leaves the scene of the crime without witnesses. The Consumer has a type, though the audience lacks that information in the initial sequences. This preference is described as a process by Dr. O'Toole: "At first, you don't know what you like and what you don't like" (Janos). Paired with O'Toole's description, it is difficult to separate victim selection from a parent giving a child several types of food until the child finds a few favorites. The same process applies to any serial murderer or cannibal. After numerous victims and meals, the cannibal can pin down the exact body part or type as a prime candidate for consumption. These selections become part of the killer's "signature" and display what Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Zizek describes as "the unconscious of our desires" (Seltzer 221). For example, Dahmer targeted a vast amount of homosexual men, performed intercourse, then murdered them out of guilt or self-deprecation. No matter the case, Dahmer's subconscious homosexual desire forced the conflicted man to face his homophobia before immediately erasing his wrongdoing by committing the vile act of murder in return. For The Consumer, no preference is verbally stated, but visually can be established based on several accident victims. All of the victims are male, which may represent a desire to reclaim sexuality or self-control, particularly for Alexia, who is the protagonist's sister and later unveiled as the aforementioned Consumer. We can view Dahmer and Alexia as related in this category. The two, both haphazard in their killings yet also cold and calculated, connect through the repression of their cannibalistic desires by re-establishing control of other humans by killing and eating them. Here, the "objects of desire" are easily seen and act as representations of the innermost minds of serial murderer.

The opening scene from the *Twilight Saga*'s first installment, *Twilight,* follows the same hunting template as *Raw*. The camera opens to a countryside. Most of the small details are similar; however, there are a few nuances. *Twilight* begins in Forks, Washington, a town with little sunlight and an odd string of murders and disappearances caused by what the population deems as an "animal control" issue. The scene opens to a forest landscape where the only sounds are that of nature. With a quick cut, the camera switches to a first-person point of view that races toward a deer. This version of "The Consumer" possesses a heightened/carnal aggression and catches the deer

barehanded. In this moment, The Consumer opts for animal blood or flesh instead of human. Though this may seem like a move against a stereotypical vampire's victim, it is worth noting victim selection is dependent on factors such as origin and gender, the modern vampire, and experimental vampirism.[1] These factors may highlight why *Twilight*'s opening vampire may opt for a non-traditional meal and subvert the common cinematic expectations established by classic vampire cinema. In particular, the modern vampire attempts to subvert those expectations. In the previously mentioned Backstein article, the author writes the modern vampire as a "story about self-control, about a man struggling to control his worst impulses" (38). These impulses catalyze the plots of both *Raw* and *Twilight* by forcing the consumers into situations that push for difficult moral dilemmas; therefore, the protagonists (the Cullen family) opt to describe themselves as "vegetarian" vampires. Vampire scholar Laura Wright furthers the examination of the Cullen family's dietary choice in "Post-Vampire: The Politics of Drinking Humans and Animals in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Twilight,* and *True Blood*":

> While Edward acknowledges that the use of the term "vegetarian" constitutes a kind of joke, the comparison indicates that such a diet is inherently unfulfilling; tofu and soymilk may sustain vegetarian humans, but they—like the blood of animals on which the Cullens subsist—are poor substitutes for the 'real thing' a diet that leaves the vegetarian with an insatiable craving for what has been omitted: bloody meat. (383)

The romantics of a male vampire repressing his innermost desires to begin a relationship with a mortal woman and consume only animal blood strips the vampire of the dark nature it once represented. Instead, the dark narrative is replaced and redistributed as a romance-based narrative. Perhaps Zizek's "unconscious desires" play a role in the vampire's life as well. Edward, a teenager who is perpetually seventeen years old, falls in love with a relatively normal high school girl, who, unlike Edward, can age and experience a full life. These two characters are juxtaposed in a romantic setting with the constant longing of both parties to grasp what the other possesses. Edward may even see Bella as the perfect human to consume, stating Bella is "[his] own personal brand of heroin," while Bella falls in love with his broody and mysterious nature. This construct falls directly into the template of a cookie-cutter romance novel, thus making the act of biting, consuming, or hunting a sexual act rather than a dark one. This exact exchange thus resets our initial beliefs and makes the act of sexual cannibalism no different to the previously described romantic vampirism. By making this exchange,

viewers lighten their thoughts on the deviance of vampirism and replace them with positive emotions; however, I assert that this action is no different than a cannibal hunting, killing, and eating a victim. The acts are identical, though cinema paints one as romantic and the other as vile. Regardless of how the acts are seen, *Raw* and *Twilight's* respective opening scenes both portray the drug-like nature of desire and beckon viewers to question what deep desires he or she must repress.

Raw and *Twilight* pay special mind to the diets of each film's set of protagonists. In *Raw*, the sheltered teenage protagonist Justine follows the family tradition to go to veterinary school. Justine's introduction into the film begins at a small diner outside of the school, where she eats with her sheltering mother and father. The scene begins with a still close-up of Justine in a cafeteria line. Justine's eyes wander. The worker asks, "no protein?" to which Justine replies, "no thanks, no meat" and takes the plate as she returns to her parents (*Raw:* 00:02:55–00:03:05).[2] After a single bite, Justine spits out the food. A lone meatball falls from her mouth, much to her mother's dismay. From the visual cues, the family's clear vegetarian lifestyle establishes meat as a taboo within the family. The mother bolts up, confronts the food worker off-screen, and exclaims: "This is unacceptable. We're vegetarians!" (*Raw:* 00:04:10–04:30). From only a few shots, viewers understand the strict rules Justine's mother has created. Perhaps Justine "may be allergic" as the mother claims, or perhaps later we will learn that the dietary rule may fall into the same category as the Cullen family morals (*Raw* 00:04:45–00:05:30*).* According to social scientists Padilla-Walker and Nelson, a strong set of rules create "high levels of warmth and support, but also high levels of [parental] control and low autonomy granting" that may cause significant damage to any questioning child later in life (Kouros 939). In Justine's case, the helicopter parent does not allow the child to make many free choices, thus leaving the child with an inability to acclimate to life in a new environment, which could cause a wild unraveling when given free choice. Though Justine's vet school hazing ritual is rather forced, she chooses to embrace the ritual out of fear of chastisement. Since this moment is her first true sense of free choice, the grasp of the helicopter parent is gone. Justine must experience her first taste of meat or face the consequences of the school "elders." Alexia, Justine's sister, chooses to shove the raw rabbit kidney into Justine's mouth, telling Justine: "[to] not start the year by chickening out. [The Elders] are watching" (*Raw* 00:15:30–00:15:45). Justine is disgusted but accepts the ritual as part of the school tradition and now understands that her "allergy" to meat was an exaggeration from her mother. The family rules are now void. As a result, Justine must decide what (or who) she wants to eat when she wants to eat it.

In comparison, the Cullen family struggles with the same outside forces and newly minted temptations of human flesh in the form of Bella Swan. Outside of Edward, one "new" vegetarian vampire named Jasper must convert to the Cullen family ideologies; however, his transformation from meat-eater to vegetarian acts as the inverse to Justine's. Jasper must deconstruct free choice in order to assimilate into the Cullen culture, a process that Justine must do the opposite of to construct free choice to fit into the veterinary school's culture. As expected for Jasper's conversion, there are numerous roadblocks for the opposing pair to endure. Jasper must repress his urges when Bella, a tasty human, walks into the Cullen family home. He licks his lips, savoring the thought of his last taste of flesh before choosing a "vegetarian" lifestyle. On the other hand, Justine must restrict her urges for meat in order to assimilate. The juxtaposition of the two characters, as simple as it may seem, provides an interesting commentary on what one must do when assimilating into a foreign culture. While Jasper crawls into the shadows, the Justine flourishes in the light of free choice.

Immediately following Justine's full introduction to meat, she begins taking steps to increase her exposure to her new "personal brand of heroin." In the dining hall, she sneaks a burger into her coat pocket only to be caught by a nearby cafeteria employee. Adrien, Justine's male roommate and love interest, is surprised by Justine's idea to steal a burger despite her emphasis on being a vegetarian. He questions her, but Justine simply replies: "Don't know" (*Raw* 00:32:00–00:33:30). Unsure of her desires, Justine must validate every choice she makes, which mirrors *Twilight's* main romantic narrative. These validations must be verbalized. In *Twilight*, Edward struggles to keep the feelings of consuming Bella at bay. He must endlessly decide to love or eat Bella, and he describes her in drug-like phrases. Wright continues in her article, "… the comparison indicates that such a diet is inherently unfulfilling … [and animals] are poor substitutes for the 'real thing'" (354). For each character, the substitutes only push closer to the carnal desires Wright describes. Justine, who must stick to tofu and soymilk as substitutes for meat, and Edward, who must consume animals to satisfy his desires for flesh, must refrain from violating family values. It is that very pressure that causes each character's demise. As *Raw* continues, Justine's love for meat only grows. In Margaret Barton-Fumo's "Pleasures of the Flesh," she describes Justine's treatment of meat as "tender kisses that quickly turn into vicious bites" (42). The alarming description beckons for an analysis that balances the film's cannibal growth with that of the aforementioned cannibals—Dahmer and Sagawa—in a way that magnifies the sexual nature of the act. Dahmer, as mentioned previously, enjoyed homosexual intercourse for which he felt ashamed. Dahmer's unwillingness to accept his identity as a homosexual man led to a downward spiral. Often, after homosexual intercourse, Dah-

mer would murder *then* consume his partners. This act fulfills one of Dr. Griffith's seven possibilities for cannibalism: sexual gratification. Sagawa falls into an identical category, yet his consumption of Hartevelt seemed more of a grasp at vanity. Dahmer and Sagawa's feasting can be visualized through Justine's shawarma consumption at the truckstop. Justine begins eating with soft and "tender kisses" to the meat that intensify with each bite. In a matter of moments, those kisses turn into "vicious bites" as Justine mauls into the sandwich. For a moment, Adrien is alarmed, yet carries on as if Justine is simply enjoying the meal. The shawarma is the "real-thing" Justine desires. In a wider context, when the "real-thing" sits before the vampire or cannibal, the intense gratification of the desired meat leads to mirroring "tender kisses" and "vicious bites" in *Twilight*. Though eating shawarma and a raw chicken breast is much less sexually gratifying than Edward's bite to save Bella, the outcome is the same. The "real thing" will never be replaced by an imitation, no matter how hard the two parties may try.

At the climax of the downward spiral, the audience views the conflicted Justine as a relatively normal girl who struggles to find herself in her new world; however, one distinction that separates the audience's discomfort with Justine's cannibalism versus the acceptance of the Cullens's vampirism is simple: the supernatural world of vampires can and will never exist while the reality of a cannibal among us can, has, and will happen again. Zoologist Bill Schutt describes this acceptance in *Cannibalism: A Perfectly Natural History*. He states that " … [humans have] evolved along a path where cultural or societal rules influence our behavior to an extent unseen in nature. Freud believed that these rules and the associated taboos prevent us from harkening back to our guilt-free and often violent animal past" (288). *Raw* implements wonderful cinematic elements to create two forms of animalistic behavior. First, there is a vast majority of camera angles in the film directed downward as actors crawl, sit, or lie on the ground in the same way animals do. Second, Justine's consumption of flesh is animalistic. Justine chomps at the raw chicken and Alexia's finger, with a degree of animalistic desperation that only worsens as the film progresses. During a party, Alexia lures Justine to the morgue of the neighboring medical school, pulls a body out, and watches as an intoxicated Justine attempts to gnaw on a finger like an animal would chew on a bone. It is this animalistic behavior that separates Justine from any of the Cullens. Much like the Cullens, Justine must learn to control the carnal desires for human flesh and replace them with animals. Opposed to the Cullens's reasoning for their diet, this decision to eventually become a "vegetarian" cannibal comes at the cost of her sister's opposing downward spiral. As Justine represents the "good" vampire or cannibal like the Cullens, Alexia represents the antagonistic villains who torment the human population. She, like the villainous coven,

opts to break every rule possible to satiate her desire for human flesh. It is at this point when the audience learns that she has caused the many car crashes plaguing the area, which directly correlates to the "animal" attacks Forks, Washington suffers from in *Twilight*.

Despite the similarities, society opts to accept only the vampire and serial killer while it rejects the cannibal. Regardless of what society deems acceptable versus unacceptable, the distinction is drawn in the fantastical world. The qualities of serial killers and vampires fit into the surreal world, almost as if these individuals do not exist in our world; however, they do. These individuals beckon endless wonder from audiences, drawing in crowds that center on every idiosyncrasy possible. Yet, despite being the intersection of both previously mentioned groups, the cannibal is deemed taboo due to the morose encroachment into reality. Just as Columbus and his colonizers did, society fears being consumed, not in the romantic vampiric way as Edward does in *Twilight*, but in the murderous taboo way Justine, Dahmer, and Sagawa chose. Between the plots of *Raw* and *Twilight*, the parallel plots connect two groups that do not seem to connect at first glance. Accepting the vampire is simple: romanticizing the consumption and curse of eternal life propels the modern vampire fantasy. However, to accept a cannibal, society must deem animalistic behavior as "normal" in comparison to the same behaviors in modern vampirical fiction. The cannibal possesses no promise of eternal life, no romantic benefit, nor a beautiful ending. Instead, the cannibal leaves dark blood, ripping bitemarks, and battered bodies. No amount of fantasy could lift the taboo veil. Until then, the cannibal remains the vampire's ugly cousin.

LUKE BARNWELL is from Statesboro, Georgia and graduated in December 2018 from the University of West Georgia with a Bachelor of Arts in English and a Creative Writing minor. He plans to pursue an MA in English and later a PhD. He wrote this paper for his senior seminar on Madness in Literature and Film. His favorite literary genre is crime and his favorite text is *Red Dragon* by Thomas Harris.

NOTES

1. 19th century vampire texts such as Stoker's *Dracula*, Polidori's *The Vampyre*, and Rhymer's penny dreadful epic *Varney the Vampire* all feature male vampires with female victims. Barring le Fanu's *Carmilla* (female vampire, male victims), this was the case for most vampire texts of the era. Meyer's *Twilight*, Mead's *Vampire Academy*, and Smith's *Vampire Diaries* all

revolve around female protagonist that may become vampires later on. *Let the Right One In* by John Ajvide uses a female protagonist but an androgynous counterpart. Vampirism in *The Strain* and *I Am Legend* spreads via plague. For these "plague-type" vampires, the world is almost apocalyptic, therefore making these vampires almost zombies.

2. The original screenplay for *Raw* could not be found online. *Netflix* does not have the original French subtitles, but only the English translation. As a result, only English quotations will be used.

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A Vehicle for Hatred: The 2014 Olympics and Homonationalism

Johanna Bear, Franklin and Marshall College

In 2014 as the world turned its gaze towards Sochi, Russia for the Olympic Games, a multifaceted global queer discourse emerged. American queer activists were outraged by homophobic human rights violations and anti-queer legislation in Russia while Russian queer activists insisted that most Western methodological perceptions of progress and tolerance were inapplicable to the unique circumstances of their history and societal evolution. Throughout the months leading up to the Olympics, homosexuality and queer rights became vehicles through which the United States could justify its hatred of Russia while absolving itself of its own tumultuous history of injustice and marginalization.

In this paper I will be engaging with the scholarly and media discourses surrounding the 2014 Sochi Olympics in order to interrogate how America used homonationalism to incite outrage for perceived homophobic human rights violations in Russia, without coming to terms with ways in which they themselves perpetuated the same violence on marginalized queer bodies. By looking at the development of queer rights legislation in both nations, I will investigate how these unique histories account for their differing perceptions of queerness while exploring how the Olympics feed into homonationalism when queer individuals use the Games as an attempt to adhere to normalizing ideas of national pride.

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

In order to challenge essentialist portrayals of Russian queer experiences, it is critical to properly contextualize a brief history of queerness in Russia

during the twentieth and twenty-first century. As Laurie Essig articulates in her article "'Bury Their Hearts': Some Thoughts on the Specter of Homosexuality Haunting Russia," the visibility and openness that the queer community enjoyed during the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 became policed as Joseph Stalin rose to power in the mid-1920s (Essig 42). Stalin identified and publicized the idea of queerness in Russia being a crime against the state, purposefully tying homosexuality with anti-government and anti-communist sentiments and representing the queer individual as a beacon of treason through the addition of Article 121.1 to the Russian Criminal Code, which made gay acts between men "punishable with hard labor" (Essig 43) and was not revoked until 1993. According to Essig, the continual turbulence and weaponization of queer identities as political, economic, and cultural scapegoats through much of the twentieth century forced the vast majority of Russian queer activism to underground community mobilization and resistance during the Soviet period and created a culture of increasing fear amongst queer individuals (Essig 44). In the immediate aftermath of the Soviet period, there was again a brief span of time where Russia was more open to sexual and gender diversity; however, Vladimir Putin identified homosexuality as being harmful to the development of minors during his rise to power and began to again demonize queerness in the media and in the hearts and minds of many Russians. Putin's rhetoric resulted in the passage of Article 6.21 into law in 2013, which was designed to protect minors from the dangers of sexual deviance.

Today, however, "despite the fact that under the Soviets and under Putin queer Russians are prosecuted and persecuted, there remains a strong and visible presence of queers in Russia" (Essig 45). In an interview with Kathleen Feyh, queer Russian activist Igor Iasine identifies that organizations including Rainbow Association, and the LGBT Network work in increasingly polarized climates to raise visibility and awareness of LGBTQ issues (Iasine 105). The idea that all queer Russians live in constant fear for their lives and safety and that they enjoy no sense of collective community or activism is one grounded in American assumptions, positing the United States as the superior nation in relation to queer progress and toleration of queer identities and casting non-Western nations as the inferior "other."

In the United States, though activists and advocates had been pushing for the advancement of queer rights for centuries, it wasn't until the 1960s that these efforts were consolidated into a more visible and united movement. The great irony of the United States situating itself as a progressive and liberal nation is that despite the relative safety that many American queer and transgender individuals have enjoyed in recent years, this perceived security masks the homophobia and hatred that is as pervasive in the United States as it is in Russia. American reactions to Russia's per-

ceived human rights violations are based in what Laurie Essig refers to as a "false sense of security about the future" (Essig 41). Though gay marriage is currently legal in all 50 states, the United States still lacks comprehensive national non-discrimination protection for individuals regardless of their sexual orientations or gender identities. These decisions are left up to the discretion of individual states, with only twenty states instituting non-discrimination laws that protect against persecution based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment and housing (Movement Advancement Project). As a result, "50% of [the] LGBT population lives in states that do not prohibit employment discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity" (Movement Advancement Project). While the United States continually positions itself as a beacon of queer progress, it fails to note the fragility and conditionality of its own tolerance. Rather than tolerance being ensured as many Americans are wont to believe, it instead exists as a far more fickle and revocable institution contingent upon the radicality of a given political administration, the economics of a given era, and public perceptions of queerness.

HOMONATIONALISM AND THE OLYMPICS

Central to any discussion of the 2014 Olympics and the relationship between the United States and Russia is Jasbir Puar's concept of homonationalism. Puar situates homonationalism as a "collusion between homosexuality and American [or Western] nationalism that is generated both by national rhetoric of patriotic inclusion and by gay, lesbian, and queer subjects themselves" (Puar 67). With the Olympics acting as a site for heightened national identity and pride, U.S. homonationalism shapes the relationship between American queer activists and Russia by positioning the normalization of queer identities as being inherently tied to the idea of nationalism. The dream of normalization amongst largely white, cisgender gay individuals causes this attempted assimilation to come with the isolation and marginalization of individuals who do not adhere to normalized or mainstream notions of gayness. These attitudes and actions, which can include alignment with conservative groups or the allocation of funds to issues affecting majority populations, play out with increasing intensity during Olympic years when individual and country become more interconnected.

The Olympic Games were founded on the intersection between national pride and sporting events, thriving on the continual manifestation of national identity in sports. As Matthew Llewellyn and Toby Rider describe in their essay "The Five Rings and the 'Imagined Community': Nationalism and the Modern Olympic Games," the Games "promised to break down cultural barriers by providing a means for dialogue and contact between

nations" (Llewellyn and Rider 22). Though the modern Olympic Games, beginning in 1894, were founded on principles of peaceful national goodwill and unity through sport, they can also "exacerbate national chauvinism, xenophobia, or various prejudicial biases. They can drive wedges between neighboring nations, [and] reignite old hatreds" (Llewellyn and Rider 22). This is especially true of nations that have long existed at odds with one another like the United States and Russia, with the Olympics giving both countries new avenues for their ongoing rivalry and hatred. Along this same vein, Llewellyn and Rider suggest the idea of the Olympics as a vehicle for nationalism, with the "athlete or team as a tangible representation of the nation incarnate" (Llewellyn and Rider 22). Under these circumstances, the athlete becomes a physical manifestation of a country's national politics and cultural heritage, providing an outlet for opposing national sentiments and occasionally providing a vehicle for hypocrisy. While the United States has spoken out vehemently against the tendencies of fascist or communist countries to offer state funding and support to athletes, the U.S. Congress has "appropriated funds to support Olympic participants drawn from the armed forces" (Llewellyn and Rider 26), fully uniting national politics and identity with sports. Through these lenses, the Olympics act as a consolidation of national pride and sentiment, reinforcing dangerous political rhetoric through sport.

In addition, the Games can assist countries in creating new national narratives through how they market themselves to the rest of the world, highlighting their victories and downplaying their losses as a display of power and international relevance. For leaders of host countries like Putin, they are a chance to bring their country together in celebration of their achievements while also getting to be selective about which portions of their history they choose to feature and prioritize. Through the creation of Opening and Closing Ceremonies that pay homage to the country's cultural heritage and traditions, host countries use the Olympics as a celebration and as an erasure of queer history and experiences. For participating countries, it is a chance for visibility and athletic achievements to represent their success and growth as a nation. In Llewellyn and Rider's words, "For emerging powers, hosting the Games has become an exercise in national rebranding before the gaze of a global audience," (Llewellyn and Rider 28). It is important to note that this rebranding is uniquely heterosexual and cisgender, with countries rarely, if ever, acknowledging their queer communities or history unless that acknowledgement is necessitated by the qualification of queer athletes for the Games or by an outcry against homophobic national politics. The prioritization of heterosexual, cisgender history through the Olympics, both in Russia and in the United States, speaks to the conservative sexual politics in which both countries are will-

ing to engage. Their fear of associating national identity with any kind of queer image forces queer individuals to adhere to nationalist tendencies to be embraced in any national context.

When American queer activists called for a boycott of the Sochi Olympics, they were not only calling for their country to not send athletes to the Games, but also for a boycott of Russian national identity and politics. Many activists had never before taken an interest in athletic competitions until they found out about Russia's alleged human rights violations, including their vehement governmental opposition to the existence of LGBTQ individuals. The Olympic stage amplified the dissemination of these narratives, with Fred Joseph LeBlanc arguing that Russian homophobia would not have been such a focused topic of discussion without the Games (LeBlanc 7). In LeBlanc's understanding, the Olympic stage allows many Western nations to "idealise [themselves] as progressive and liberal against a foreign culture, in this case Russia, despite the inability for some Western states to extend full rights to LGBT subjects" (LeBlanc 7). These calls to boycott the 2014 Games acted as misguided attempts to demonize Russian sexual politics and normalize anti-Russia narratives instead of as vehicles through which to offer support to marginalized queer communities in Russia by using the international exposure of the Games to share their narratives and publicize the need for solidarity and action.

Figure skating, a sport frequently associated with queerness through antiquated notions of the gender binary and gender performance (Braverman), became a center for the media rhetoric surrounding the potential boycott of the Games. Four-time U.S. National Champion Jeremy Abbott spoke out several months before the U.S. Figure Skating Championships, saying:

> Russia is hosting us. I'm not going to go into somebody's house and be like, 'Um, the way you decorate is hideous, and you need to completely redo this or I'm never coming back.' It's a little rude, so I don't want to say bad things about a country that's hosting the world, essentially … Pulling athletes out of a competitive event isn't going to solve some country's political disputes … it's not going to do anything to change their policies or change the country or change the world. (Tharrett)

Though Abbott's opposition to the potential boycott speaks to an understanding of some of the costs of such a decision, his commentary on the Olympics not acting as a political vehicle shows a lack of understanding of the nuances of all that the Olympics can entail in a global sense. He fails to address how an athlete can represent a nation, embodying that nation's political sentiments on an international scale. Furthermore, by

using the metaphor of Russia as a house and visiting countries as guests, Abbott decided to try to occupy a middle ground, neglecting to hold Russia accountable for its actions because of its position of power as the host of the Games. Though he was willing to acknowledge the power of a host nation, he was unwilling to extend that same power to the Games themselves, instead choosing to futilely try to separate the Olympics from their nationalist origins.

Johnny Weir, a retired figure skater and openly gay man reiterated Abbott's sentiments on the Games saying, "I see the Olympics for what they are—it's young people performing for their country and for glory. That's how I see the Olympics, I don't see them as a political protest" (Sarkar). Both skaters' comments exist in stark contrast to the myriad of political actions that have defined the Olympic movement, as exemplified in an article from Advocate.com entitled "The Long History of Olympic Boycotts, Protests and Demonstrations," which was released several days after Weir's comments became public (Garcia). These dialogues prove how closely intertwined the athletic, the political, and the national can be in media rhetoric and societal consciousness and how American individuals can remain distant from the impact that events like the Olympics can have on different countries. Though Abbott and Weir were clear about their opposition to a boycott and desires not to interfere with Russian practices or ways of life, they also were not cognizant of how the Olympics can function as a vehicle for national pride and the globalization of national politics. This resulted in both of them turning a misguided desire to remain apolitical into a commentary on American insulation and disconnect from global discourses.

PERFORMATIVE LIBERALISM

The concept of homonationalism is mirrored in LeBlanc's idea of "performative liberalism" (LeBlanc 10), which accounts for how the United States performs as a liberal nation, projecting a façade of tolerance and equity to position itself as a superior and progressive superpower. During the lead-up to the 2014 Games, the discussions surrounding the potential boycott were not limited solely to athletes, as American celebrities began to involve themselves in the larger media discourse. Both actor Harvey Fierstein and singer Lady Gaga expressed vehement support for the boycott, with Fierstein demanding that "The Olympic Committee must demand the retraction of these laws under threat of boycott" (Fierstein) and Gaga saying, "I don't think that we should be going to the Olympics at all" (Selby). Fierstein and Gaga's comments speak to the American culture of performative liberalism, whereby two cisgender queer individuals use their

platforms to promote tolerance and equity on the surface, while failing to dig deeper and understand the global contexts of nuanced cultures and experiences. By attempting to express support for Russian queer communities, they instead ended up promoting a course of action that would have served to further isolate and disconnect those communities from any sense of global solidarity across varying demographics of identities, experiences, and national origins.

CONCLUSION

As the world focused on Russia for the 2014 Sochi Olympics, queer activists in the United States began to express extreme opposition to the perceived homophobic human rights violations that were taking place in Russia. This opposition embodies a homonationalist and performative liberalist mindset of U.S. superiority that posits the United States as a liberal nation and an unequivocal beacon of progress. Rather than reflect inward and examine the history of marginalization, discrimination, and erasure that continues to be upheld by national policies in the United States, many individuals instead chose to use the Olympics as yet another vehicle for expressing American hatred of Russia.

In order for American activists to remain critical of Russian practices, they must first address the human rights violations continuing to take place in their own country, including the mass persecution and incarceration of black Americans and the murders of trans women of color. As Russia continues to view queerness as something originating in the United States, American outrage has had little to no effect on policy or public opinions of queerness in Russia. Those who wish to heavily critique Russia's treatment of queer and trans individuals should critically examine the concept of teleological progress and note that different countries are at different points in their development in order to avoid projecting imperialist notions of progress onto other nations. In LeBlanc's estimation, the best course of action is rather to "continue to recognise Russian homophobia, but allow Russian gays to ultimately evoke what *we* consider to be early, archaic Stonewall-style gay politics" (LeBlanc 12). The assumption that any nation should be at exactly the same point in their advancement of queer rights is an essentialist one, born out of the continual centering of American experiences and histories as the only ones that matter. The Olympics provided a unique stage for these dialogues due to the close relationship between the athlete, their home nation, and the increased national sentiment that the Olympics bring out in viewers. By feeding into this heightened nationalism, Americans were able to justify their hatred of Russia by opposing its homophobia and simultaneously ignoring the repeated human rights vio-

lations in their own communities, making the Olympics a battleground of intertwining homonationalism, performative liberalism and the illusive ideal of progress.

JOHANNA BEAR attends Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania where she is a joint Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and Theatre major. She owes endless gratitude to Professor Gabriel Mayora for prompting the creation of this paper and for his constant support throughout the editing process. In her ongoing work, she is incredibly interested in exploring representations of lived experiences and identities on stage and how those representations shape societal discourses and stereotypes.

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Construction of the New Woman: Female Relationship Structures in *The Romance of a Shop* and *The Woman Who Did*

Lexie Berrett, Florida State University

The end of the Victorian era in British history witnessed significant changes in the construction of gender roles, transitioning from an emphasis on the separate spheres ideology to a more progressive outlook on the roles of women. This *fin-de-siècle* [end of the century] feminism produced a generation known as "New Women" that desired autonomy and agency to exist outside of the domestic sphere prescribed to them. These New Women were the first of many to participate in the first wave of feminism emerging in the late nineteenth century, focusing primarily on the movement of women into the public sphere. This wave of feminism led to the claim that "women and men should be treated as equals and that women should not only be given access to the same resources and positions as men but also be acknowledged for their contributions and competencies," a political view that carried into the twentieth century and beyond (Kr−løkke 5). Amy Levy's *The Romance of a Shop,* published in 1888, is the story of four sisters who embrace the ideals of the New Woman and engage in a professional photography business following their father's death. One of the first published explicitly New Woman novels was *The Woman Who Did* by Grant Allen in 1895 and faced serious criticism for its presentation of marriage and liberal outlook towards the protagonist's sexuality. While both *The Romance of a Shop* and *The Woman Who Did* feature female protagonists that embody the ideal of the New Woman, the presence of female relationships to guide and support the female characters in their endeavors is the critical determinant of their respective successes as New Women in Victorian England.

As the New Woman became more prominent in society, she also became a very popular figure in Victorian literature. As Ann Ardis claims in her book *New Women, New Novels,* the New Woman became a critical character trope as women became increasingly resentful of their confinement to the domestic realm. Authors began writing female characters in this new lens, "demystifying the ideology of 'womanliness' where women have no life but in the affections" (Ardis 3). The female characters in literature began to reflect their counterparts in reality. These women began stepping outside of the boundaries of the home and marriage, acting upon a newfound agency to seek independence in the public arena. With the extension of formal education to women, female education began to encompass more than standard domestic knowledge and the "accomplishments" of the affections and middle-class femininity. Coupled with education and a desire for personal autonomy, the New Woman was a crucial piece of the female suffrage movement that emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW WOMAN

The end of the nineteenth century witnessed a series of changes that directly drove the expansion of the New Woman ideal as nearly all aspects of Victorian culture were revolutionized with new technologies and an evolving worldview. New sources of connectivity and increased education resulted in an adapting social climate, especially in regards to gender relations. The feminism that emerged at the end of the century was one of the earliest strides for female suffrage and equal treatment in British history. In an address to the National Liberal Club in 1890, Florence Fenwick Miller states that the object of the Women's Franchise League is "the procuring for women equal civil and political rights with men" (Miller 1). The members of this league desired not only equal rights, but also equal responsibility to maintain the morality of Victorian society. The key area of distinction between the rights of men and women was in marriage. Despite the implication of a close union, women lost all rights they possessed, becoming enslaved to their husbands. Marriage law was structured to inherently favor men, as the independent woman and her assets became the husband's property upon marriage. The Women's Franchise League and similar collaborative female groups called for a reform of marital law, emphasizing the need for equality between men and women within the domestic as well as the public spheres.

The New Woman became associated with a "perceived newness, autonomous self-definition, and determination to set her own agenda in developing an alternative vision of the future," as Angelique Richardson posits in *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact* (12). Equipped with a more advanced

education and social outlook, these women were afforded new freedom to seek work outside of the home. While maintaining the understanding that motherhood was a privilege afforded only to women, New Women became increasingly independent and no longer sought marriage as their primary source of worth. The Lorimer sisters in Amy Levy's *The Romance of a Shop* embark on a journey for self-sufficiency, emphasizing the compelling quality of the possibility of creating their own success. Gertrude implores, "why not turn to account the only thing we can do, and start as professional photographers? It would be a risk, but if we failed we should be very little worse off than before," acknowledging both the risk and reward of their self-definition and determination (Levy 54). Their professional ability in the craft of photography provides them a significant advantage as New Women, allowing them to both embrace this new future and create their own vision of economic sustainability grounded in their familial bonds and technical aptitude. Within their new home in London, the domestic and public spheres are fused. Both the professional and domestic work is split equally amongst the sisters, ensuring that their success is entirely of their own accord.

Due to the popularity of the separate spheres ideology, unmarried women faced a significant disadvantage even compared to their enslaved sisters. Without a partner to fulfill the duty of legitimate reproduction, unmarried women were considered surplus to the requirements of society, posing "a considerable, if inadvertent, threat to the separate sphere ideology … they risked spilling out into the public sector" (Richardson 4). Grant Allen's protagonist in *The Woman Who Did,* Herminia Barton, exists primarily in this surplus space. Her outright refusal of marriage determines that she must seek her own economic liberty. Refusing to be "false to [her] sex, a traitor to [her] conviction," she expresses that any method other than the preservation of female independence would represent the "economic and social superiority of the man," diminishing woman and child to property (Allen 20). She becomes a perfect example of the New Woman; while she understands the moral duty of a woman to become a mother and to impart her knowledge upon a child, she resents the patriarchal marriage structure for its predication upon the unnatural possession of a woman by a man. The threat of these unmarried women infringing upon the male space resulted in a whole population of women considered of little value to society and was one of the key factors contributing to the fear of the New Woman. As New Women desired freedom to operate outside of the domestic sphere, they posed a significant threat to the order of social life, and, specifically, a threat to pre-established male superiority.

However, the goal of the New Women was not a radical disruption of the social hierarchy. Many wanted to "achieve social and political power

by reinventing, rather than rejecting, their domestic role" (Richardson 9). These New Women called for a moral reformation of the area of life in which women were allowed to operate as well as the freedom to move beyond this boundary. The discourse upon the ideals of New Woman feminism centered around the supposed rejection of the "woman's duty" to marry and bear children, but the *fin-de-siècle* [end of the century] feminist ideal was not built upon a disdain for domesticity (Hathaway). The beliefs of the New Woman were not grounded in usurping male dominance and rejecting domesticity, but rather the right to seek intellectual and professional satisfaction in addition to her domestic duties. While marriage is "part and parcel of a system of slavery," motherhood is a woman's "social and moral salvation" (Allen 12, 38). Herminia's idealism is grounded in her desire to impart this progressive knowledge upon the children born into the evolving culture of Victorian England. The ability and expectation of women to become mothers suggests that these women "should so be provided for … because [they] fulfill in the state as important and necessary function as the men do," but due to the unequal nature of marriage "no other way exists for women to be free save the wasteful way of each earning her own livelihood" (Allen 21). Without motherhood, a woman remains unfulfilled, but she can achieve this fulfillment without being forced against her will into a form of domestic slavery under the guise of marriage.

With this idealism in mind, many critics of Levy's early New Woman novel claim that the resolution of the novel with the remaining three Lorimer sisters married presents evidence to weaken the position of New Women in regards to marriage. Fanny, Lucy, and Gertrude are married off one by one and Phyllis ends up dead—is this not proof of their failure to exist as independent women in an evolving society? However, the sisters' marriages cannot be viewed simply as a rejection of their previous ideals, but must be analyzed as an extension of the balance between the domestic and public spheres. Lucy and Gertrude's marriages to Frank Jermyn and Lord Watergate, respectively, do not represent a regression from their New Woman values or a shunning of their domestic duty. Rather, the women embrace their marriages upon the grounds of an equal engagement between an independent man and woman, continuing to operate within a space where the domestic and public overlap and interact. For Lucy, "the photography has not been crowded out by domestic duties … her husband no less successful in his own line" (Levy 193). She and Frank are both able to work independently in their own fields, garnering both professional and familial success. In marriage, Gertrude is able to dedicate herself to writing full-time and muses on whether her son will inherit "his father's scientific tastes or the literary tendencies of his mother," implying the possibility of

equal influence upon the child (Levy 193). The Lorimer sisters maintain their efforts to find the proper balance between the domesticity of their old lives as well as the new public feature of their positions as New Women, maintaining a culture of equal rights and responsibilities within their homes and marriages.

The distinction between the domestic and public spheres presents the dichotomy of the home as a safe space and the city as one of danger for women. This dichotomy perpetuates the idea of the city as a liminal space for women, disconnecting them from their domesticity and placing them in an environment that is in direct opposition to their predetermined function within society. For the Lorimer sisters, the spatial shifts from suburban domesticity to urban independence represent a movement from old to new methods of thinking. S. Brooke Cameron dissects this spatial shift in her article, "Sisterly Bonds and Rewriting Urban Gendered Spheres in Amy Levy's *The Romance of a Shop*," posing the idea that women exist in a liminal space whenever they step outside of the boundaries of the home. As they move through this liminal space, their "sisterly bonds resist total separation between the home and cityscape" (Cameron 78). The network they create amongst themselves gives them full access to both the domestic space and the newfound urban space. Due to the bonds they create between themselves and the dual space they occupy, the sisters are able to resist their Aunt Caroline's attempts to undermine their values regarding womanhood by physically separating them from "the complicated evils which must necessarily arise from an undertaking so completely devoid of chaperones" (Levy 72). Alternatively, Herminia is consistently in a state of fluctuating separation. In "[throwing] Girton overboard, and [coming] to live in London," her initial spatial shift is reminiscent of that of the Lorimer sisters (Allen 4). However, she is forced to remain in the liminal space between domestic and public when she succumbs to Alan's wishes to go abroad, and again when she returns to England an unwed mother (Allen 23, 37). Her constant state of flux keeps her in a state of ambiguity as she fails to make connections that would ground her in this connective space.

In *The Romance of a Shop,* Fanny herself exists in a liminal space. Her fears regarding the implications of women going into shop-keeping prevent her from adopting an excitement similar to her sisters. Described as "an anachronism, belonging by rights to the period when young ladies played the harp and went into hysterics," Fanny is not a New Woman and exists apart from her sisters in this sense, unable to relate to or understand their progressive ideas regarding female behavior (Levy 56). With no education beyond that of the female accomplishments of domesticity, she remains on the cusp of progress, becoming more housekeeper than

sister, revived in spirit only by her marriage to Edward Marsh (Levy 140). Despite this, the sisters refuse to be separated and the solidarity of their bonds allows them to redefine their domestic sphere, merging the family and work dichotomies to create a fluidity of movement between the spaces that were considered separate by nature. For Herminia, her instability in navigating the space between the domestic and public spheres results in her inability to ground herself in the connective space and she remains suspended between the two.

Separating herself from her sentimental counterparts, the New Woman became her own woman, focusing on her personal fulfillment within and without the confines of the home. Both Levy's Lorimer sisters and Allen's Herminia Barton construct their respective identities around this new-found agency, embarking on the journey from domestic imprisonment to public freedom. By constructing their main characters in the image of the New Women emerging in Victorian society, Levy and Allen emphasize the new liberalism of the late nineteenth century that would lend itself to the suffrage movement in the early twentieth century. A crucial determinant of the success of these New Women would prove to be the networks that emerged amongst them in the face of opposition.

FEMALE CONNECTION AND SOLIDARITY IN VICTORIAN ENGLAND

The construction of gender roles in early Victorian England was predicated upon the separate spheres ideology in which the behaviors expected of men and women and the activities they could engage in were inherently separate. As these ideological separations developed, the spaces men and women inhabited became more designated as well. Men occupied a public sphere, engaging in both professional work as well as socio-political interactions; women were expected to exist as a counterbalance to the labor done by their husbands or fathers, remaining relegated to the domestic realm. The cult of domesticity is an exclusively patriarchal construct, grounded in the belief that there was a sharply defined separation between appropriate male and female behavior. In this lens, "sexual oppression originates with patrilineal kinship and women must seek out or create alternative female-centered systems" in order to counteract the idea of the devoted and submissive image of the Victorian "angel in the house" (Cameron 83). The Lorimer sisters are relatively free from patrilineal influence following their father's death. This loss strengthens their bonds with one another, influencing their decision to "keep together" despite attempts on their aunt's behalf to separate and marry them off (Levy 54). The emphasis on their female bonds provides a matrilineal organization of their home following their transition into the

urban realm and allows them space to become relatively removed from the sexual oppression ingrained in the old Victorian society.

If we argue that the matrilineal construction of bonds directly affects the New Woman's ability to resist ingrained oppression, Herminia's lack of female-centric relationships serves as the key point of weakness in her development as a New Woman. Her progressive ideology, viewed as a moral stain, influences both Alan and Herminia's fathers to make active attempts to "guard [their] sisters … from the contamination of [her] opinions" (Allen 27). Unable to form bonds with her own sisters, she is revoked of her birth-right matrilineal connections, treated "even as one dead, [her] name was never pronounced among them" (Allen 40). This isolation forces her to create her own female connections, but she is only accepted by degrees and her daughter is not accepted at all, as "even the Bohemians refused to let their children ask after Miss Barton's baby" (Allen 39). She attempts to forge a bond with Dolly, but Dolly's development of her own female network exists directly in opposition to Herminia, considering "the moral standpoint of the other girls a great deal more sensible than the moral standpoint of Herminia's attic, she accepted the beliefs and opinions of her schoolfel-lows because they were natural and congenial to her character" (Allen 50). In an attempt to indoctrinate her child to her utopian values, Herminia is unable to establish a meaningful bond with her child and Dolly's own bonds with her school friends prove more powerful in her socialization. Herminia becomes the antithesis of the angel in the house, fully embodying the spirit of the madwoman in the attic, and her radical values continue to isolate her daughter and herself from the society in which they operate.

Women were prevented from engaging in public relationships on the same level that men were able to within the domestic sphere of existence. Shackled with the expectations of proper behavior, friendships with other women became the main source of interaction beyond the confines of the domestic realm. The complexity of these female relationships developing within the middle of the nineteenth century lent itself to the new liberalism of the latter half of the century. The debate over whether or not women had the capacity to engage in wholesome and productive relationships without men continued well into the late nineteenth century, with arguments cen-tering around the ways in which "women were possessive, competitive, and untrusting," and the ways in which "their friendships [were] notoriously shallow and only a rehearsal for the serious business of relationships with men" (Nestor 36). However, the new forms of interaction that began to develop between women gave rise to new professional relationship struc-tures outside of the home, creating a "modern principle of association" and jumpstarting the establishment of female communication networks and organizations (Nestor 36).

Based upon intellectual communication as well as personal connection, women "encouraged each other as never before in the public sphere, nurturing ambition, encouraging independence, and fostering artistic aspiration and talent" (Nestor 36). The excitement the Lorimer sisters felt at the prospect of self-determination and sufficiency is fostered largely by their encouragement of one another:

> 'Gertrude and I,' went on Lucy, 'would do the work, and you Fanny, if you would, should be our housekeeper.'
> 'And I,' cried Phyllis, her great eyes shining, 'I would walk up and down outside, like that man in the High Street … '
> 'Our photographs would be so good and our manners so charming that our fame would travel from one end of the earth to the other!' added Lucy, with a sudden abandonment of her grave and didactic manner. (Levy 55)

The sisters create a network of solidarity that enables them to engage in intellectual and professional collaboration that is essential to their success. The professional and domestic work is split equally among them, allowing their joint home and workplace to become a "space that is exclusively feminine, wherein there is no need for masculine intervention" (Cameron 81). Phyllis's comments upon her new role demonstrate the ways in which the New Woman was provided opportunities to engage in behavior previously regarded as exclusively male behavior. Without the interjection of male influence, the sisters remain grounded in their mission for a self-motivated future of independence. In contrast, without any sense of female solidarity, Herminia succumbs to male pressure. She muses that "the man's need must retain the personal hegemony he has usurped over woman, and the woman who accepts him as a lover must give way in the end" (Allen 23). Coupled with her lack of feminine support and Alan's weariness over the societal reception of her beliefs, she is broken down and re-inscribed to the old modes of morality.

As female friendship extended into the public sphere, the idea of female solidarity evolved to include non-maternal matters, aiding in the shifting conventions of behavior. These new networks extended beyond the platonic, enabling new possibilities for friendship "with the features of common purpose, encouragement, challenge, and mentorship" (Nestor 45). New Women found themselves engrossed in a nexus of women with the same goals, providing outlets for expression as well as professional networking in the context of equality and collegiality. It is through these female bonds that New Women were able to define and strengthen their cause, asserting that given equal opportunity, women can do work as well as men.

In her book, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England,* Sharon Marcus discusses the construction of relationships among Victorian women. Victorians accepted friendship between women because "they believed it cultivated the feminine virtues of sympathy and altruism" (Marcus 26). By stimulating and developing the qualities desired in the wife, female friendships were considered crucial to family life, becoming mutually reinforcing to marital relationships. The coexistence of women within the domestic sphere provided these women "socially permissible opportunities to engage in behaviors commonly seen as the monopoly of men," including competition, active choice, and struggles with beliefs (Marcus 26). Despite strict societal constraints, the lateral space provided by complex female relationships allowed women to branch out without radically disrupting the established social hierarchy. Women would not only discuss their family lives but intellectual pursuits and opinions regarding political and religious values. There was a sense of security afforded within female relationships to express thoughts that would have been considered inappropriate in conversation with their husbands. The relationship structure in place within the Lorimer household allows the women to speak freely and openly adopt a sense of self-possession, especially in their opinions of male counterparts. The women openly discuss their feelings about Frank Jermyn, Lord Watergate, and Sidney Darrell without fear of old modes of proper behavior, reinforcing their status as independent women. Meanwhile, Herminia is forced to turn her gaze inward, "[creeping] back into unrecognized recognition" and spending the rest of her life doing hack-work to support her child (Allen 38). While her name was associated with her radical outlook on morality, it is a recognition that is directly linked to her increasing isolation within society. Unable to find a network of women to support her, she is left shouting into the void and internalizing the values she so wishes to project into public discourse.

For the Lorimer sisters, collaboration is crucial in promoting and guaranteeing their success, their sisterly bonds creating a "self-contained economy of feminine labor and consumption" (Cameron 83). Without this female economy grounded in mutual support, their actions run the risk of being misinterpreted and forced back into the old gendered economy as "woman's unalienable pleasure" is only possible within this contextualization (Cameron 86). The girls begin to engage in a newfound gaze of the world around them, whether it be through the consumption of the modern city or looking upon their male counterparts in the same vein as the men have often gazed upon the women. Without this empowerment, the societal gaze of the urban sphere would prove oppressive as Gertrude experiences in her interactions with Sidney Darrell. Darrell looks at her with "a glance of cold irony" under which she finds herself viewed merely as the "type of

woman to which she belonged," directly referencing her status as a New Woman (Levy 108). It is through her relationships with her sisters in the safe space they have created that she is able to bolster the confidence to stand up to her male counterpart in a battle of gazes: "the strife of the woman who demands respect, with the man who refuses to grant it" (Levy 131). Under this oppressive male gaze, the New Woman must turn to her fellow women to maintain her sense of self-possession and confidence as Gertrude does in her interactions with her sisters in their designated safe space. She redefines the position of men such as Darrell, emphasizing his unwillingness to respect their mutual gaze and insisting upon "politeness which says plainly: 'this is for my own sake, not for yours'" (Levy 110). In doing so, she outwardly condemns his behavior and sets forth a challenge of his outdated values.

Through this analysis of opposing gazes and the struggle between old and new methods of thinking, we can analyze the ways in which Phyllis' susceptibility poses a significant risk to her re-assimilation to old gendered economies. Many of Levy's critics maintain that Phyllis's moral vulnerability signifies "the dangers of transgressing the boundaries of prescribed femininity" and is, therefore, a key piece of evidence against the plight of the New Woman (Cameron 88). Phyllis ventures out of the safe space of the sisterly sphere, seeking pleasure in the form of masculine attention which leaves her unprotected from the pressures of classical society. However, the abandonment of her support system and subsequent downfall does not represent the punishment of the woman who subverts societal expectations, but rather serves to emphasize the importance of female solidarity. It is Gertrude's love for her younger sister that enables her to save Phyllis from the grasp of Darrell, returning her to the safety of their home, stating, "if it were all to be done again—I would do it" (Levy 174). The sisterly love between the girls strengthens their New Woman resolve and when Phyllis asks for forgiveness, Gertrude implores, "who am I to forgive you? Have you forgotten how I love you?" presenting another instance of female solidarity and equalizing (Levy 178). Phyllis may die from her consumption, but her bond with Gertrude prevents her from falling victim to the consumptive gaze of Sidney Darrell.

In Allen's novel, Herminia's love for Dolly is not enough to save her from assimilation into the old gendered economy. As she grows up, Dolly begins to revolt from the "unpractical Utopianism of her mother," and, leaving Herminia alone in her mission, whereupon "the child whose success was to atone for her own failure … turned out a complete disappointment, and had ruined the last hope that bound her to existence" (Allen 50). Dolly's resentment of her mother's ideals and secrecy regarding her past leads her to abandon her mother, the rebellion of her lifetime finding vent: "I can-

not stop here, associating any longer with a woman such as you have been. No right-minded girl who respected herself could" (Allen 61). Herminia attempts to save her child from the consumptive gaze of Victorian society, but, because they lack the connection of a powerful female bond, her daughter's adherence to old gender roles results in her demise. After the one female relationship she maintained dissolves into hatred, she takes the final step in her quest for martyrdom by killing herself. As she prepares herself for death, she lays upon her bed and "[waits] for the only friend she had left in the world," embracing the camaraderie of death and abandoning her mission in one last attempt to satisfy her daughter (Allen 62). With no support system in place, Herminia is forced to face the inequality and oppressive values of Victorian society on her own. While her intellectual and moral ideations of New Womanhood are strengthened by her interactions in her youth as she ages and faces the judgement of moral law and society, her beliefs are undercut at every turn. Without any sense of solidarity, she is left unprotected and exposed to the cruel hand of patriarchal society, her failure in developing a strong relationship with her daughter ultimately resulting in her failure as a New Woman.

Operating alongside the construction of the New Woman ideal was the construction of deep and meaningful connections amongst these women. Without the professional and social networks linking these women, their cause would be significantly weakened. Whereas the Lorimer sisters maintain a solid network within their home and business, Herminia Barton is left to face the battle for independence on her own. Female solidarity became critical not only in their personal relationships, but also within the professional relationships women began to engage in that would ultimately put an end to the separate spheres ideology.

CONCLUSION

The Victorian emphasis on maintaining separate behavioral spheres for men and women created a hierarchical system predicated on the moral and intellectual superiority of men. The inability of women to transcend their domestic prisons resulted in the emergence of a class of women enslaved to their husbands and their homes. As the century progressed, new ideas regarding the position of these women and their surplus counterparts resulted in the emergence of a wave of feminism calling for the political and civil equality of the sexes. These New Women sought independence in the domestic sphere and integration into the public sphere, calling for a reformation of the moral standards that kept women designated as property of their male peers. "Concerned with access and equal opportunities for women, the first wave [of feminism] continued to influence feminism in both Western

and Eastern societies throughout the 20th century," and the New Woman became one of the first figureheads of female liberation (Kr. køkke 1). As the New Women became more prominent in society, they became key characters in literature, no longer existing as odd and superfluous side characters, but retaining agency in their independent lives.

The freedoms afforded by expanding educational and occupational opportunity resulted in new female mobility that expanded beyond the lateral movement previously afforded within Victorian friendship structures (Beaumont 213). Women were now not only engaging in female platonic relationships, but also developing a series of professional networks with the common goal of empowering each other and encouraging the extension of intellectual and professional endeavors outside of the family. It is through these new relationship structures that a sense of female solidarity was able to strengthen the cause of the New Woman, empowering their mutual attempts to reestablish the position of women in Victorian society.

Both Amy Levy's *The Romance of a Shop* and Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* feature female protagonists that embody the ideal of the Victorian New Woman; they are independent, self-sufficient, and prioritize their personal fulfillment over marriage. Levy's Lorimer sisters develop strong sisterly bonds that reinforce their liberal ideals as well as strengthen their ability to retain autonomy in the public sphere of London, allowing them to transcend and merge the domestic and public spheres. Allen's Herminia Barton boasts the educational privilege and intellectual prowess of a self-proclaimed New Woman, but she lacks the female bonds that nurture and support her ideologies, dooming her to martyrdom in a futile attempt to raise the first free-born child. While both novels depict the lives of New Women existing and operating within the evolving social environment of Victorian London, the strong sisterly bonds developed by the Lorimer sisters in Levy's work lend to their success in merging the dichotomy of domestic and public, while Allen's Herminia Barton, continually isolated from her fellow woman, results in her death upon her failure to impart her Utopian values upon her child.

LEXIE BERRETT is a senior at Florida State University studying English Literature and Business Management. The published piece was written for a senior seminar with a critical focus in Victorian-era literature. A few of her favorite authors are Jane Austen, Kurt Vonnegut, and Joanna Russ. Post-graduation, she hopes to work in the publishing field or continue researching the intersectionality of feminism and literature in pursuit of a graduate degree.

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Sublime Madness: An Exploration of Anorexia, God, and Aesthetic Sublimity

Megan Fogg, University of West Georgia

In her book, *How to Disappear Completely: On Modern Anorexia*, writer Kelsey Osgood explores the baffling and contradictory nature of eating disorders—how these illnesses differ from other psychological disorders and addictions, and how sometimes anorexia narratives, works published in the name of recovery, can actually perpetuate the disordered attitudes and behaviors they claim to caution against. Nowadays, while many mental health advocates encourage the spreading of "awareness," the erasure of stigma and the importance of honesty about one's struggles have made the line between benefit and backfire thinner and more elusive. Additionally, with the increasing influence of internet culture in the past two decades, cult-like communities called "pro-anorexia" or "pro-ana" have arisen all over the globe.

However, regardless of whether these books, films, or online communities claim to be recovery-focused or not, for people prone to eating disorders, body dysmorphia, or simply low self-esteem, these avenues can pose a serious threat. The rhetoric permeating this subculture calls out to the vulnerable like a siren song. In her essay, "Reading Disorders: Pro-Eating Disorder Rhetoric and Anorexia Life-Writing," scholar Emma Seaber introduces the concept of "reading disorders," a term she has coined to describe this very phenomenon. While Seaber notes that eating disorder memoirs, most notably Marya Hornbacher's *Wasted*, do not directly cause eating disorders in healthy individuals, they present an "interpretative gulf" that separates those who can walk away from books like these unchanged, and those who cannot. She elaborates: "Presented with a text, the (reading) disordered reader's analysis will, thus, reflect only their reading of themselves. The reading disorder hypothesis resists and poses a direct challenge to the implicit

conclusions of the visual interpretation of anorexia and thereby avoids the negative consequences of framing the illness as disorder of superficiality." In Seaber's view, then, one's false perception of anorexia as an acceptable way of living—an aspiration, even—rather than a condemning act against the self marks an already unhealthy mind sowing the seeds of sickness. As an example from someone with personal experience, Osgood describes her initial opinion on eating disorders as a teenager: "I didn't think of anorexia as a disease, really, but rather as the most logical progression of self-control. It was dieting perfected, and perfection was always the goal" (22). Despite her skewed perception and subsequent decade-long struggle with anorexia, Osgood still questions the legitimacy of her own illness (and others'), wondering at which point one's disorder becomes "real." In a chapter entitled, "Blurry Lines," Osgood ponders various female friends and acquaintances she has encountered over the years, and their potential status as "real anorexic" or "wannarexic," (someone who desires the diagnosis). While Seaber takes a more empathetic stance on this overall cultural phenomenon, Osgood smartly criticizes herself and today's eating disorder culture throughout her book, not only shedding light on the problem, but also de-romanticizing the disease for women and girls prone to its strange allure.[1]

Perhaps it's a chicken or the egg situation—which comes first? Was the disordered mindset regarding one's self-worth and deep, internalized misogyny present to begin with? And what causes someone to take these beliefs to the point of starvation and potential self-destruction? Certainly, every eating-disordered person's experience is different. In fact, an individual anorexic's multiple relapses can vary dramatically from one another in their initial triggering, form, and level of severity. Given that anorexia and bulimia have psychological roots that manifest into superficial preoccupations and behaviors that contradict every natural instinct of survival—why do these disorders seduce so many young women, even when their consequences are described in such harrowing, cautionary detail? Is there a way to share one's story in a responsible manner, and what is the point, anyway? What if the stigmatization of mental health is not altogether dissolving, but instead being overturned and inverted?

WARPED NARRATIVES

In March 2009, Laurie Halse Anderson released her fifth young adult novel *Wintergirls*, which chronicles the struggle of an eighteen-year-old girl caught in the throes of anorexia, psychosis, and the grief of losing a former friend to bulimia. Although apprehensive and ignorant on the subject of eating disorders, I bought the book the day it came out and quickly devoured it.

Initially, for fifteen-year-old me, *Wintergirls* provided a sobering glimpse at what these "eating disorders" really were. I understood, then, how pain could be displaced onto food, how the punishment of one's body could serve as a coping mechanism, and how these habits could snag in the mind, eventually commandeering all control. Though many young adult novels seem to ring false or make a mockery of youth, Anderson gives validity to the teenage experience with her fresh, lyrical voice. As with her previous books, she cuts inside the protagonist's tormented psyche and splays it open through the power of language alone. While literature certainly cannot redeem all suffering, it has its place. Art will never fully rub away the sting of trauma, but it honors the human experience as a whole and serves as witness to those dark places inside us that no one would otherwise see. Obviously, adolescence can be extremely difficult. Many teenagers may not realize that their lives can actually improve in the future, and they develop a figurative tunnel vision. In the meantime, literature like Anderson's helps.

Suffice it to say, Anderson's words have literally changed people's lives. However, with writing so powerfully and psychologically entrenched inside the unreliable narrator's perception, as in the case of *Wintergirls* (as well as with other books and films depicting eating disorders), I see it as a catch-22. While reading *Wintergirls*, it is impossible to peel the main character, Lia Overbrook, apart from her anorexic gaze. The strangers and acquaintances around her lose their identities and become their BMIs, their excesses, their rolls, their "padded hips." In a school cafeteria scene, she forgoes her classmates' names altogether and replaces them with items on their lunch trays. For example, a girl from the drama club becomes "cheesefingers." Another student becomes "spaghetti," and another, "lettuce&ketchup" (106). In addition, a calorie count accompanies most mentions of food items, and even the most seemingly insignificant descriptions portray food as the enemy, and the surrender to it an act of grotesque gluttony and weakness. Through Lia's warped perception, a casserole might as well be a cartoon anvil falling from the sky. When sitting around their table, her family, while trying to help her, actually forms the frontline of an opposing force in Lia's mind. However, despite the disgust, animosity, and bitterness Lia projects towards food and to the well-meaning people around her, the reader can clearly see that Lia's negativity towards others stems from the deep loathing she harbors for herself.

Early in the novel, Lia describes her first experience at residential treatment for anorexia, recovering from starvation:

> I ate and ate. They stuffed me like a pink little piggy ready for market. They killed me with mushy apples and pasta worms and little cakes that marched out of the oven and lay down to be frosted.

> I bit, chewed, swallowed day after day and lied, lied, lied. (Who wants to recover? It took me years to get that tiny. I wasn't sick; I was strong.) But staying strong would keep me locked up. The only way out was to shove in food until I waddled. (28)

Clearly, the illness has corrupted her ideas of strength and health. These disturbed beliefs permeate at least ninety-five percent of the book, and they can be misinterpreted by overly impressionable readers. Lia eventually goes on to describe her discharge from treatment at 107 pounds, and her new meal plan bound in a "slut-red" binder. Her idea of "waddling" means landing at a BMI calculation technically still underweight, and despite getting discharged from multiple treatment stays, her breakthrough does not come until the very end. Her perception of the world is so drunk with delusion and toxicity that "disordered readers" cannot help sinking into this intoxication themselves. Yet Lia's story matters, because it reflects the misunderstood reality of many girls and women in the United States as well as abroad. The ultimate outcome of *Wintergirls* encompasses hope, healing, and knowledge, as well as fear and uncertainty—much like turning points in real life. But how can one render this relevant adolescent experience in ways that will not harm vulnerable minds?

According to the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) and the Journal of Adolescent Health, anorexia is the third most common chronic illness among adolescent females—after asthma and type 1 diabetes. Additionally, anorexia has the highest mortality rate of any mental illness. In an imagistic and social media obsessed world, it comes as no surprise that an alarming rhetoric I call "eating disorder culture" has infected not only personal testimony and memoir, but also the online world. Unfortunately, the prevalence of this type of disorder increases along with more awareness of its existence. NEDA and the International Journal of Eating Disorders elaborates: "An ongoing study in Minnesota has found incidence of anorexia increasing over the last 50 years only in females aged 15 to 24. Incidence remained stable in other age groups and in males." Almost equally alarming, according to recent studies cited by NEDA: "Eating disorder symptoms are beginning earlier in both males and females, which agrees with both formal research and clinical reports" ("Statistics & Research on Eating Disorders"). The problem continues to saturate our world with little reprieve, despite efforts to dispel myths and spread awareness. However, eating disorders constitute a vast part of many people's realities, so they *should* find their way in literature, art, and pop culture in some form or another, right? In addition to artistic rendering for artistic rendering's sake, family and friends of those afflicted should have a way to more deeply glimpse into their loved one's psychological struggle,

and therefore legitimize it. However, in writing about eating disorders, I believe in the importance of balancing out the anorexic propaganda with post-recovery enlightenment—i.e., the character's realization of the truth and decision to pursue health. I do not necessarily believe there is a way to truly delve into the psychological realm of anorexia and bulimia without including some material considered "triggering" to those prone to these illnesses. But there are ways to cut down on the harmful material, such as neglecting to provide any numbers (like calories and weight), and choosing to portray the ugly parts of the disease—like how the longer the anorexia sinks its claws into someone, the more blinding it becomes. The anorexic's viewfinder shrinks, and the demands of their illness choke out the people around them. It is an incredibly toxic, isolating illness. In that vein, while it is important to illustrate the sick person's struggle, displaying the devastating effects on his or her family and friends should garner just as much attention. Lia's mother, a brilliant cardiac surgeon, cannot save her own daughter. She tries to support Lia's recovery, but in the end, is rendered helpless. Or how about addressing the result of chronic, treatment-resistant anorexia? Take a note from Kelsey Osgood, who opens her memoir with ugly, visceral images of starvation's long-term effects, and much later ruminates on the lost stories of those who remain trapped in anorexia's clutch, those "forever condemned to that pathetic diaspora of the aging patients who weep over scrambled eggs and tighter jeans, a ghost in [our] peripheral vision" (209). Those whose sad stories will never breathe the outside air. The more romantic, clichéd aspects of eating disorders downplay so much of the harsh reality, and it shouldn't be that way.

Sometimes when mental health awareness advocates try to promote their cause, they actually end up romanticizing illness. This seems to occur most often regarding eating disorders. On a surface level, people affected by eating disorders use this phenomenon as a coping mechanism. It is the anorexic's way of legitimizing her struggle, an illness otherwise rooted in deep denial. However, many of the writers behind this supposedly "pro-recovery" rhetoric remain seduced by their illness, and this ultimately permeates the language. Readers can often sense inauthenticity in writing. Even those with truly valid motives behind publishing "triggering" material (such as genuinely trying to subvert certain societal beliefs about the issue) still pose a problem and unravel damage that's not easy to fix. For example, when scrolling through hashtags such as "anorexiarecovery," "edrecovery," or simply the name of the dreaded disease itself, I stumble upon seemingly endless social media accounts, many created in the name of recovery, filled with "before" and "after" photos, haunting images of girls at their very thinnest. Some of these accounts only contain food pictures (therefore much less triggering), and are designed to help the users behind them stay

accountable and document their progress towards health. However, other profiles continually share scary pictures of rock bottom with poetic captions dramatizing the individual's problem with little regard towards how that may affect others vulnerable to this affliction. Even quality, popular young adult fiction—such as *Wintergirls*—can perpetuate this triggering rhetoric, as it sucks its readers into the dangerous (yet vital to understand) anorexic psyche. As someone who has observed and been affected by this phenomenon for nine years now, I understand the issue from an insider's perspective. However, despite my own intimate familiarity with anorexia and its overt presence in today's culture, I have only recently found the problem clearly articulated.

Anorexia's competitive nature also contributes to this phenomenon. Many people with eating disorders believe that their illness (and the "strength" that supposedly enables them to starve and over-exercise) remains the only aspect of their identity that gives them worth. Some see—or *want* to see—themselves as stronger, sharper, purer, and overall superior to other people who give into "carnal desires" (otherwise known as nourishment, a basic, vital element to survival). Obviously, most people can see the sick, warped toxicity of this false belief. In relation to that, living stuck inside the anorexic mindset, plus adding the element of competition, can form a deadly combination. However, despite this, hospital eating disorder units and residential treatment centers make up a large percentage of the recovery options available. Contrary to this mode of treatment, one way to cut down on the spread of anorexic propaganda is to actually separate the anorexics from one another, and monitor and remove harmful triggering material.

Osgood suggests that "if your child develops an eating disorder, encourage the sufferer to start therapy as soon as possible without rushing him or her into a hospital or group facility. Anorexics should be treated individually for as long as possible, or at least cared for by competent professionals in a general psych population as opposed to a strictly eating disorders unit" (231–32). Although eating disorder units can benefit some people, I support Osgood's opinion. Sadly, surrounding oneself with others who are just as seduced by the disease often serves to keep the delusions in place. Five years ago, while struggling with my own mental health, I entered an inpatient psychiatric facility and then an outpatient program with a trauma-focused therapy group, where I was the only member currently recovering from an eating disorder. At that point, I had already begun to seriously address the root issues of my anorexia prior to hospitalization, and by the time I was admitted, other psychiatric symptoms had surfaced, taking a higher priority. However, I still struggled with my eating disorder, and finding a so-called "new normal" took me over a year. If I had been surrounded by

other anorexics in my vulnerable state, I think the fight for physical well-ness would have intensified. I knew as much at the time: throughout my recovery, I swore off almost all eating disorder-related films, articles, and books, for fear of relapse.

On another note regarding treatment: unsurprisingly, many individuals afflicted with eating disorders (and behavioral issues of any kind, for that matter) have suffered significant trauma, which, in part, triggered their disordered habits to begin with. Along with the importance of individual treatment for anorexia that strips the disease of any appealing quality, there is another element of treatment I would like to address. Just as trauma can rob its victim of speech, I think types of therapies that can pierce through the silence (such as sand tray therapy or art therapy) should be utilized until the words return. Trauma transcends language. The sublime and the spiritual transcend language. In certain cases, therapy should too.

Ultimately, in post-recovery life, it is important to evaluate one's true state of mind and motives when considering whether or not to publicly share one's disordered experience. For example, is your intention to be an advocate or simply an artist? Or is it to garner attention? Any of those can, at the right time and place, be acceptable, but at least be honest with oneself. Sometimes this requires serious introspection. Artists and writers have the impulse to dig deep and share dark truths with their audiences, sometimes even personal ones. I think most of us recognize this. But many of those who do not categorize themselves that way will try to disguise their craving for memoir as some kind of humanitarian mental health awareness movement, when the motive is more egocentric instead. In that regard, at this moment in time, eating disorders have a higher prevalence in Western cultures, and with the continually increasing influence of westernization, studies show eating disorder rates shooting up globally ("Eating Disorder Statistics"). I suppose this does not really come as a surprise in a world so heavily doused with celebrity culture, or in the United States specifically, a country riddled with dreams doubling as curses. Along with considering motives, the writer should be honest about her true audience. As becomes clear in Osgood's email correspondence with Marya Hornbacher, Pulitzer Prize nominated author of the notorious *Wasted: A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia*, Hornbacher "wondered if perhaps she was too young to have so publicly lamented her struggles" (248). She also admitted that she had written the book primar-ily for the loved ones of eating disorder sufferers, rather than the sufferers themselves, so that they could fully grasp the severity of the problem, and therefore "put them in the hospital." True intentions will automatically alter one's language, but still, seriously re-evaluating descriptions and word choice before posting or publishing proves another vital element in un-glamorizing anorexia. Osgood comments on this when she discusses the anthology *Going*

Hungry: Writers on Desire, Self-Denial, and Overcoming Anorexia. She discusses how these writers describe their own anorexic tendencies:

> For example, they could have spared the reader any in-depth description of the anorexic body, especially when it sounds lovely and graceful. '[When I was anorexic,] my older brother's friend took some photographs of me … My eyes look big and dreamy; my lips are full. I have a slender body, long legs,' writes Francesca Lia Block. She uses the metaphor of 'faeries' throughout her piece, likening them to anorexia itself. 'That perfect blend of angelic and demonic—the faerie. Ethereal, delicate, able to fly. Also dangerously seductive, beckoning us into worlds unknown.' Beautiful writing; great *advertising*. (241–42)

On the contrary, Osgood opens her book with pages upon pages that describe the ugly reality of the disease. She documents the last years of a young woman permanently caught in the throes of anorexia's effects, a thirty-something-turned-walking-cadaver, eventually gone too soon. In addition to the way *Going Hungry*'s talented writers literally advertise anorexia, the book's very existence attests to the anorexia and identity issue. Many eating disorder sufferers believe they should cling to their disorder as means of self-improvement and strength, though the reality of anorexia actually proves the opposite. Still, *Going Hungry* seems to present a different idea: "By collecting eighteen writers, including a Pulitzer Prize winner and numerous Ivy League graduates, to write about their experiences, which they do beautifully, Taylor is perpetuating a big problem. She is supporting the idea that anorexia leads to a type of fame—or at least bragging rights—but she does a big disservice to readers by neglecting to include just one 'civilian' voice, such as a person without a Pulitzer, maybe, or someone whose life was essentially decimated by anorexia" (237–38). Osgood goes on to explain her own personal worries and regret over how her years of illness actually stalled her intellectually, rather than enhancing her abilities. She also ponders the "perceived link between genius and madness," and how the two are not automatically intertwined, though this belief continues to sink its roots deeper, especially within the subculture of eating disorders. Additionally, in that vein, I think the way society values more salacious, clawed-my-way-up-from-rock-bottom stories over slightly quieter stories works as another obstacle in the way of a solution as well. Osgood emphasizes that while recovery from an eating disorder is very difficult, it is not remarkable:

> What would be really remarkable is remaining healthy in a world in which one is essentially handed opportunities or manuals for self-

sabotage, a world in which acts of histrionic self-destruction are, in many cases and many ways, considered more extraordinary and worthy of attention than keeping your head above the surface of water … A memoir of a person who, in this era, made it to the age of thirty without being diagnosed with a psychological disorder or struggling with an addiction: now that would be remarkable. (246)

Ultimately, killing the stigmatization of mental health problems presents quite a challenge, and fetishizing (and sometimes overdramatizing) it can simply invert the problem rather than solve it.

In addition to the importance of individualized therapy for anorexics, Osgood also propagates a family-centered approach called the Maudsley method. She elaborates:

Rather than send an anorexic off to break bread with other an-orexics, the Maudsley method advocates that the sufferer eat all meals and snacks with his or her family. If the anorexic does not finish the prescribed amount of food, there are consequences that resemble traditional punishments given to children, such as revok-ing television or phone privileges, or not allowing the anorexic to go to a friend's house or a party. (233)

While I understand Osgood's reasons for supporting this treatment approach, ultimately I disagree with such a family-centric method. Eating disorders result from a variety of different factors, and so it should come as no surprise that the anorexic's family dynamic intertwines deeply with her illness. I do not necessarily believe that the family unit inherently causes the eating disorder, but for such an intensely psychological issue, how can it not form a piece of the equation, whether consciously or unconsciously? Because of this, I think that family members forcing the anorexic to eat would only light a greater fire beneath the eating-disordered motives. Additionally, this method would further associate food with guilt, shame, punishment, and anger—an outcome most undesirable for a recovering anorexic, someone who already has these elements correlated in her mind to begin with.

Anorexia obviously differs from other types of mental disorders, such as depression or bipolar disorder, and I think it falls closer to addiction on the spectrum of behavioral issues. I think anorexia should be treated in a similar way to alcoholism or drug abuse. Anorexia is not simply a shunning of food; it is a twisted addiction to the *idea* of food, the shape and size of one's body, and the suppression of hunger. It is an absurd, Wonderland-esque approach to rules, food preparation, and portion control. It is wanting something, with everything you are, but restraining yourself because you feel scared

that once you start, you will not be able to stop. Early on in my recovery, I read *Overeaters Anonymous*, one of the twelve-step books. While I am not fond of the cringe-worthy, shame-inducing title, this book gently forced me to place my eating disorder under an unflattering light, and evaluate it for what it was: a type of addiction. At certain points, my whole life revolved around food. Perhaps it goes without saying: OA does not glamorize eating disorders. The book presents over thirty heartbreaking personal stories of individuals who have struggled with trauma and emotional problems that triggered binge eating and obesity, as well as a story from an anorexic, and another from a bulimic. While the twelve-step program is not perfect, it provides a tangible way for one to actively fight against one's downfall, and work for a healthier, fuller life. The one-day-at-a-time approach also helps those struggling to narrow their focus when addressing such an otherwise overwhelming goal.

THE SUBLIME

While the philosophical theories of the sublime consist of different arenas, the aesthetics branch is among the most well-known thanks to the works of eighteenth-century philosophers Immanuel Kant and Edmund Burke, as well as the ancient texts of Pseudo-Longinus (Holmvquist and Pluccienik). Know that when I discuss matters of the sublime here, I am referring to it in the realm of aesthetics: philosophy "dealing with the nature of beauty, art, and taste, and with the creation and appreciation of beauty" (Kant). I will also be relying primarily on Kant's version of the sublime. Burke and Kant both focused their theories around the dualism of beauty and the sublime, but they also differed in various ways, mainly in how "Burke's theory is, broadly speaking, directed toward the aesthetics of such situations in which some elements are felt either as painful or as threatening" (Holmvquist, Pluccienik). Also, according to scholar Simon Josebury, Burke emphasized a "sensual pleasure" and physiological response to the sublime, whereas Kant focused on a "purely subjective mental realm" instead (Josebury). Despite the corporeal element of anorexia, I too will focus on the sublime in a psychological sense throughout my discussion.

Scholar Sheila Lintott's essay, "Sublime Hunger: A Consideration of Eating Disorders Beyond Beauty," explores the idea of deeper aesthetic concepts driving anorexic and bulimic behavior—namely, the Kantian sublime. After she details the prominence of eating disorders nowadays, she goes on to emphasize how the eating disorder "might begin as an attempt to embody the ever-elusive ideal of female perfection, but at some point in the progression of the disorder, that external goal becomes a side issue and eventually a non-issue. In other words, at some point current beauty

ideals fail to motivate" (68). Lintott explains how beauty and sublime differ from each other, in how the sublime experience consists simultaneously of attraction and repulsion, unlike beauty, which is merely attraction without purpose. The pleasure of the sublime, according to Kant, arises indirectly and gradually. Additionally, the enjoyment of the sublime emerges not only from the object that triggers the experience itself, but also our own ability to "reflect on and respond positively to frustrating or frightening stimuli" (Lintott 70). Lintott makes certain to clarify Kant's two different versions of sublimity: mathematical and dynamic. She uses the sky as an example for the mathematically sublime, in its vastness. She comments on how its "formlessness" suggests infinity, and how, "of course, we cannot perceive infinity. Nor can we perceive the sky in its entirety, for much of it eludes our perception" (70). This realization triggers frustration at first—at how "we know that the sky continues, even though we cannot perceive that it continues" (69). But then this is where the sublime pleasure creeps in, as we realize that though we constitute small physical vessels in an indescribably large universe that we cannot fully *perceive*, our minds can at least *conceive* of it. Therefore, our mental capacities encompass the world, and so much more beyond it. In Kant's own words: "The mind has a power surpassing any standard of sense" ("Immanuel Kant: Aesthetics").

In contrast to the mathematically sublime's size, the dynamically sublime's wonder consists of massive power. Examples of this include various forces of nature. In short, dynamic sublime experiences, like the mathematically sublime, remind us of our own minuteness in stature. Yet they still offer a pleasure and peace in acknowledging our own "strength of spirit" (71) and how ultimately the fact of our sentience and inner souls reigns superior to these worldly forces that threaten to decimate us. Though we can be destroyed physically, nothing can obliterate one's soul from ever existing. Jumping ahead, Lintott explains how "a person with an eating disorder turns her willpower inward in an attempt to verify that her existence transcends the physical aspects with which she is identified by others at every turn" (74). Eating disorders are only "about" weight to a certain extent: "When confronted by a desire for food, the eating-disordered individual rejects the dominance of nature over her physical self by refusing to eat or refusing to take in nutrients from the food. This domination of self over nature is the crusade of the anorectic and bulimic" (75). The body becomes an enemy that threatens one's attempts at control. However, the anorexic does not just wage the fight against one's body, but something much larger instead. I think perhaps one of Lintott's most provocative and potent statements comments on the true nature of anorexia regarding popular beauty standards and the objectification of women:

> Whereas the dieter, by equating thinness with worth, believes she must physically conform to externally prescribed ideals, the eating-disordered individual blatantly rejects these ideals by far surpassing them in her excessively thin body. The eating-disordered individual's self-starvation is therefore a two-fold protest. First, she lays claim to that supersensible portion of humanity that Kant (and others) reserved primarily for men. Her protest is motivated by her refusal to embrace and enhance the physical aspects of herself to please others. By judging her primarily in terms of her physical appearance, the world around her is undervaluing, if not outright denying, that there is anything to her other than that appearance. Second, her eating disorder, the logical conclusion of the impossible and contradictory messages society sends her, provides her with the voice of protest against the dictated to her. Her very existence—in all its boniness and weakness—testifies to the absurdity of the ideals championed by the world around her. She will not allow them to define her, especially in reference to her looks. (79–80)

While anorexia can be seen as submission to the patriarchy, when examined in this light, it becomes almost a mockery of society's beauty ideals—an ironic way of fighting back. I do not believe one can overestimate the depths of hurt and desperation that can accompany being valued or devalued by others on based on one's appearance, and the distances one will go to assuage or resist that pain. In this regard, I think Lintott's theory accounts for why girls turn to anorexia. The pain of degradation based on one's appearance can stoke the fire of disordered behaviors. Rather than dwell on the pain, the anorexic exchanges it for a new type of pain: starvation and over-exercise. Starvation is not simply the stuff of superficiality. Many people could not starve themselves for extended periods of time by sheer will, so in enduring this, anorexic women and girls not only feed their anger to a bombastic caricature of the pressure and scrutiny burdened on them, but also rise above an obstacle that not everyone could overcome. When Lintott mentions "that portion of humanity that Kant reserved for men" she refers to the sublime and Kant's (later retracted) comments about how the sublime is for men and beauty is for women—how women possess "beautiful understanding," while men's understanding is a "deep understanding" that females supposedly cannot attain. However, if girls and women can stand up and face the sublime (which is far more powerful than men), then we certainly can stand up to toxic masculinity and corrupt ideals ingrained in society. At the risk of melodrama, the anorexic literally becomes a martyr in protest of female objectification and the pursuit of bodily perfection. The trick to recovery is realizing that, however potent

these beliefs may be, they ultimately form the basis of psychological illness. In the end, inflicting harm on one's body does not effectively "stick it to the man," after all. At least ten percent of those with anorexia will end up casualties of their own war.

BEYOND MADNESS

This theory of "sublime hunger" also extends to the dangerous nature of anorexia narratives—why people share their stories in potentially detrimental ways. They want more than bragging rights or validation of their experience—they want proof. If they can conjure up a dramatic story about how they succeeded in achieving a startlingly low weight, stared death in the face, and then returned to the land of the living (with photos of themselves looking like Holocaust victims), then they have transcended their bodies (by overcoming carnal desires) and have also transcended their individual, insignificant lives by constructing heroic epics out of themselves. We all just really want to follow Dante and take our readers on tours of the circles of Hell, right? We want to show them how we clawed ourselves out. We want to show them the very grit under our nails. But perhaps most of all, we want to prove it to ourselves. We want to validate and forgive ourselves for the selfish, irrational, toxic things we have inflicted on others, by pointing to our own personal hells. "In summary, then," writes Lintott, "sublime experiences are those that begin with a moment of serious frustration or threat. Yet, rather than leaving us befuddled or running for safety, they allow us the opportunity to verify that there is something within ourselves that can deal with the frustration or stand up to the threat" (72). This desire for a wild story is really a desire for the sublime. And the sublime does not just live separately, outside of us, but within.

Sublime experiences are such a personal matter, because our identities form a vital piece of it. Our own intimate connection to and capacity for the sublime commands some of the wonder itself. In Lintott's words, "[T]he true object of admiration and respect is not the object that occasions the experience of the sublime. Rather, it is that portion of us able to reflect on and respond positively to frustrating or frightening stimuli. The sublime makes salient our depth and power, and an awareness of our capacity for the sublime is intimately connected to self-admiration and respect" (70). Part of spiritual sublimity and the experience of it is the fact that it no longer matters that everything is not about us. Suddenly, who we are suffices, even if we are just mere humans on a planet with billions of others. However, sublime experiences cannot all be encompassed by mere joy and awe. Some of the sublime can be evil and even threaten one's life, such as the fight against dark spiritual forces (and the overcoming of these).

Fighting for your sanity and your life falls inside that category. God—or general spirituality—as a sublime experience can be classified as *both* "dynamically" and "mathematically" sublime—great in both size and power. The fact that we can "realize that although we cannot perceive the absolutely large, we can conceive of it" is part of what makes it so awe-inspiring. We cannot perceive of God, but we can conceive of him. This form of sublime experience, unlike anorexia, truly does overcome the physical self, in the sense that it promises the existence of much *more* beyond this physical earth, and it gives our beings so much more worth. And these experiences prove to ourselves our own worth—that even though we are no match for God or for fierce, overpowering elements of nature, such a hurricane or tornado, we ultimately "notice that there is some aspect of ourselves not threatened by [these] great force[s] of nature. We can acknowledge, therefore, that a part of ourselves is superior to nature and its laws" (Lintott 71).

Anorexia does not provide a portal to the sublime. On the contrary, anorexia kept me chained to mundane reality, to my own anger and vain, self-absorbed desires. The sublime could not be farther from that. Lintott testifies that while a desire for the sublime serves as part of the eating disorders behavior's motivation, ultimately anorexia distorts the notion of the sublime in two ways: "There are two necessary ingredients to the sublime that are not present in the extreme behavior of the anorectic or bulimic. In Kant's theory, the cause of the sublime state of mind is external to the agent and the agent is in a place of safety. But neither of these elements is present in the eating disordered behavior … This is because she refuses to satisfy her hunger—an internal force—and does so to such extremes that she finds herself in a seriously dangerous position" (81). When I experienced the sublime, I had begun eating again. For some inexplicable reason, or maybe for no reason at all, I was held by my higher power, and just safe enough for those ten days, until I was no longer able to function in the outside world, and was immediately admitted to Ridgeview Institute.

While part of the sublime experience does involve the inner self, it is not so consumed with the self to the point of ignoring the rest of the world. If a person sticks with their eating disorder long enough, it will turn them into a toxic and wholly self-absorbed person. In my own experience, while hitting some form of rock bottom indirectly led me to what I consider sublime experiences, these occurred once my eating disorder had already begun to die, after I had consciously decided to fight it. Anorexia wilts a person inward, but the sublime made me discover that there is so much more beyond this earthly reality and ourselves than what we could have ever imagined. I used to be afraid of language running dry—like, what if everything had already been written and there were no more word combinations left? No more fresh images or phrases to spark? No more poetry.

Until I glimpsed the vastness of sublime beauty—this beauty that, if experienced by everyone, would be universally acknowledged, undeniably—I had feared running out of words. These experiences changed everything for me. What frustrates me now, however, is how it transcends language—how anything I could possibly say would be a travesty. *I can't put it into words.* I always used to think that was a cop-out. But I know it is true in this case. Kant articulated how the mind can conceive of sublime greatness but ultimately cannot fully perceive it, how the imagination fails to fully grasp all the wonder, and how this leads to pain, but in the end, the pure wonder overcomes it. The wonder of the sublime and wonder at one's own ability to experience it in the first place. While we will not run out of words anytime soon, I confess that our craft still has its limitations, much as we stubbornly work to defy them. Madness can be described, packaged, labeled, diagnosed. But the spiritual sublime—which perhaps can be experienced on earth most fully when the edges of our sanity begin to crumble—transcends.

MEGAN FOGG graduated from the University of West Georgia in the spring of 2018 with an English degree and Creative Writing minor. She currently works in Atlanta. A longer version of this essay appears in Dr. Gregory Fraser's senior-seminar anthology as part memoir, part academic analysis. She would like to thank the *LURe* staff for this opportunity.

NOTES

1. While males also suffer from eating disorders, this study takes a feminine focus, as females constitute ninety percent of those afflicted—according to Stanford researchers—due to reasons explored later on.

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"I think you guys are going to have to come up with a lot of wonderful *new* lies": Literature as Medicine in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*

Chyna Gowan, University of West Georgia

"Bayonets aren't much good against tanks."
—Kurt Vonnegut (in a letter home from a P.O.W. Repatriation Camp)

Language's inability to explain the atrocities of war permeates much of anti-war, specifically post-World War II, literature. With around fifteen million battle casualties and over forty-five million civilian deaths, World War II provides a daunting task for the writers of the late-modernist and post-modern period. Marina MacKay concludes that "The major challenge facing … account[s] of World War II is how to convey … the crushing totality with which it managed to turn into a battleground everything it touched" (MacKay 1). Part of this conveyance manifests in literary accounts. Post-war novels convey issues that the battlegrounds themselves fail to fully explain, which raises the question of literature as medicine. What could better succeed in articulating the "crushing totality" of war than the raw—often blisteringly true—stories of war themselves? War novels such as Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* and Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* create literary worlds that ironically provide therapeutic spaces. Even more so, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* uses war language not as an arbitrary over-explanation of its tragedy but rather as an escape into a space where grieving, followed by adequate coping, is possible. Moreover, the novel offers a realistic, albeit wildly unconventional, view of combat and its effects. After Vonnegut served in the U.S. Army and fought in World War

II, he wrote harrowing war stories masked by satire and a non-chronological structure. Through his fiction, he offers more than just bayonets to fight the metaphorical tanks of emotional trauma that followed the soldiers home.

A literary world where fiction itself becomes a sort of treatment aids the depiction of post-traumatic stress disorder within World War II literature. The disorder, named PTSD in 1980—thirty-five years after the end of World War II—remains the primary disorder used to identify the lasting effects of war. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, or DSM, also introduced post-World War II, originally defined PTSD in "a rather simpler definition than we now use," according to Nigel C. Hunt. Hunt says, "if someone reacted due to combat stress, then they would be classified as having an 'adjustment reaction of adult life', which was 'fear associated with military combat and manifested by trembling, running and hiding'" (Hunt 51). Currently, the DSM uses six criteria for diagnosing and treating PTSD with definitions including "recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections," "feeling[s] of detachment or estrangement from others," "[a] sense of a foreshortened future," "difficulty in falling or staying asleep," and "clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning" (Hunt 52–53). While this list of definitions continues and provides a broader understanding of PTSD as a mental disorder, it was unavailable during World War II trauma.

For an anti-war novel like *Slaughterhouse-Five*, published in 1969, even the initial definition and diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder would have been nonexistent. The psychological means for understanding this post-war disorder would have evaded doctors treating Vonnegut's protagonist, Billy Pilgrim. Even so, this ironic hero's satirical account of World War II provides ample understanding of the realities of war. Hunt, while discussing literature and trauma, agrees with this inherent function of literature by explaining the relationship between psychologists and war novels:

> Psychologists have traditionally ignored literature as a potential source of data … [but], after all, the nature of psychological data can include all behaviours of people, including writing. Our understanding of the psychological effects of war benefits by a detailed consideration of literature published in the area … [because] it provides an opportunity to explore responses to war trauma in other times and cultures. (Hunt 161)

This psychological data within anti-war novels provides plenty of evidence of the after-effects of war. The unscientific approach of psychologists limits true and raw knowledge of the mental toll soldiers face after exposure to

rigorous training, casual death, and forced re-association within society. War novels provide greater gravity to this subject—something that pure methodology could never fully provide. An exploration into these effects underlies Billy Pilgrim's life.

In war-filled narratives where grieving and coping seem nonexistent, the concept of literature as medicine may never cohere. How can an event so horrific be adequately conceptualized within the pages of a contemporary novel? James Dawes answers this question through two models of under-standing: "the emancipatory model, which presents force and discourse as mutually exclusive, and the disciplinary model, which presents the two as mutually constitutive" (Dawes 1). In most war novels, Dawes disciplinary model greatly succeeds over the emancipatory model. While language and violence seem unable to exist within the same sphere, literary language, in the form of anti-war fiction, seeks to provide a space of connection between death and its explanation. Considering this, James Dawes asserts, "[The American war novel's] philosophy is … existential … but it is just as often obtrusive and ham-fisted—a structural risk in war representation, it must be said, since the heart-sickening content demands at least some specula-tion about the meaning of recklessly shattered lives" (MacKay 57). Despite being "ham-fisted," war novels are less obtrusive as they are freeing. For authors such as Norman Mailer, Joseph Heller, and Kurt Vonnegut, this paradoxical ability and inability of language to provide explanation high-lights the need for war novels to react in the same way as antibiotics and vaccines work within the body. War novels must inject the reader with the disease—exposing them to perverted patriotism, flippant loss of life, and followed understanding of trauma—in order to cure them.

THE VACCINE

If the anti-war novel paradoxically plagues and cures the reader, how does literature exist as a transcendent medicine? The use of satire and humor in recollections of war offers insight into this paradox. Kurt Vonnegut's anti-war satire *Slaughterhouse-Five* offers a protagonist who is mentally plagued by the effects of war. Although Vonnegut survived the firebombing of Dres-den, Germany, he never explicitly refers to himself within the novel: with a third person omniscient narrator, the structure focuses on Billy Pilgrim, a fictional soldier suffering from PTSD who also survives the Dresden raids, hunkered in a slaughterhouse below the city. Vonnegut describes Billy as "a funny-looking child who became a funny-looking youth—tall and weak, and shaped like a bottle of Coca-Cola" (Vonnegut 23). When assessing Billy, one of the Englishmen even says, "This isn't a man. It's a broken kite" (Vonnegut 97). Instead of creating a brawny hero who survives the difficul-

ties of war through his own strength, Vonnegut chooses an unconventional "tall and weak" character who exists as less of a hero and more of a medical case study—a malleable youth who survives war but mentally deteriorates, in a non-linear fashion. Herein lies the injection and the first sign that this humorous novel is also a vaccine.

Vonnegut's refusal to write *Slaughterhouse-Five* chronologically highlights its satirical elements, the foremost being Billy's obsession with science fiction and perverted healing on the fictional planet of Tralfamadore. Since Billy discovers the sci-fi novels of Kilgore Trout, a down-and-out fiction writer who fails to produce anything close to a literary masterpiece, he paradoxically discovers and prohibits forms of treatment. Ultimately, there exists no tangible treatment or medication for Billy Pilgrim. Even while experiencing a twisted type of healing in his own mind, Billy's life within the novel ends scourged by trauma. Vonnegut experienced a similar trajectory—prompting him to write "[this] funny book at which you are not permitted to laugh, [the] sad book without tears." With "people numbering 135,000, nearly all of them civilians" dying above his head in Dresden, Vonnegut lived through one of the largest massacres of World War II (Klinkowitz 11). John Somer, a foremost Vonnegut scholar, suggests that "the Dresden firebombing was the central and most deeply traumatic event of Kurt Vonnegut's life—and that he would spend twenty years coming to terms with it, treating its horror in oblique ways through his first five novels before facing it directly in … his masterpiece" (Klinkowitz 12). Just as his famous protagonist struggles to understand the atrocities he sees, Vonnegut struggles, even after writing several war narratives, to piece together his own trauma. *Slaughterhouse-Five*, then, exists as humorous in multiple ways, but the novel also offers the clearest understanding of war that Vonnegut could imagine. Thinking about the novel in terms of literature as medicine, a vaccine that introduces the body to the disease (which is the overtly and satirically displayed horrors of World War II), provides a deeper junction into the understanding of war-related trauma and PTSD.

THE DISEASE AND DIAGNOSIS

> "On about February 14th the Americans came over, followed by the R.A.F. their combined labors killed 250,000 people in twenty-four hours and destroyed all of Dresden—possibly the world's most beautiful city. But not me."
> —Kurt Vonnegut (in a letter home from a P.O.W. Repatriation Camp)

Billy Pilgrim's treatment within the novel shows the astounding lack of his own ability and others' ability to see his mental madness for its medical sig-

nificance. The novel's fifth chapter logs his stays in hospitals and treatment facilities. This section shows the lack of medical knowledge about Billy's PTSD and an inappropriate approach to handling mental instability. One instance happens while Billy is in Dresden watching a staging of *Cinderella* performed by Englishmen dressed up as women:

> Billy found the couplet so comical that he not only laughed—he shrieked. He went on shrieking until he was carried out of the shed and into another, where the hospital was. It was a six-bed hospital. There weren't any other patients in there. Billy was put to bed and tied down, and given a shot of morphine. (Vonnegut 98)

This serves as a humorous foreshadowing of Billy's self-admittance into a mental hospital after the war, only two pages later. Billy's reaction abandons medical jargon and creates a realization of trauma through the appearance of men dressed as women. Vonnegut satirizes Billy's first encounter with shell shock in Dresden by creating the moment out of performative literature. The comical aspect of the event becomes what sends Billy to the hospital, ultimately what initiates his diagnosis: following "[a] couplet so comical," Billy's instability strongly surfaces. This moment in the novel seems difficult to consider funny, but Vonnegut uses its humor to reveal Billy's disease. After being "put to bed and tied down, and given a shot of morphine," Billy rests in a shed without fellow patients. This highlights the earlier stated lack of medical knowledge about PTSD. The men who carry him out give Billy Pilgrim no hope of escaping an inward struggle that has less to do with physical pain and more to do with emotional trauma. The irony of this reaction, then, sets the stage for Billy's scattered and disconcerting travel through time and space.

From this moment, the novel travels to Lake Placid, New York—three years after World War II ends. Billy has admitted himself into a hospital because of his mental issues:

> He woke up with his head under a blanket in a ward for nonviolent mental patients in a veterans' hospital … They were free to come and go as they pleased, to go home, even, if they liked—and so was Billy Pilgrim. They had come here voluntarily, alarmed by the outside world. Billy had committed himself in the middle of his final year at the Ilium School of Optometry. Nobody else suspected that he was going crazy. Everybody else thought he looked fine and was acting fine. Now he was in the hospital. The doctors agreed: He *was* going crazy. They didn't think it had anything to do with the war. They were sure Billy was going to pieces because his father

had thrown him into the deep end of the Y.M.C.A. swimming pool when he was a little boy, and had then taken him to the rim of the Grand Canyon. (Vonnegut 99–100)

This introduces Billy's status as a soon-to-be doctor and also provides the first medical assurance that Billy is mentally unstable—"the doctors agreed: He *was* going crazy." Even when Billy and his doctors agree on the fact that he suffers mentally, however, Billy receives little to no treatment and a lackluster explanation of his disease because "they didn't think it had anything to do with the war." Vonnegut himself was wary about the practice of psychiatry. According to his son, who was an integral part of posthumous publications of Vonnegut's work and is a doctor himself, "[Vonnegut] was very nervous and suspicious about psychiatry … he was afraid that therapy might make him normal and well adjusted, and that would be the end of his writing. I tried to reassure him that psychiatrists weren't nearly that good" (Vonnegut, *Armageddon* 3–4) Vonnegut writes the encounter between Billy and the doctors humorously but realistically. Mark Vonnegut was right, the "psychiatrists weren't nearly that good." Since doctors lacked an accurate description of PTSD within the time that Billy Pilgrim admits himself into the veteran's hospital, his doctors would have been ignorant to its medical definition. However, they have pure sight—Billy's trauma is overlooked and defined as past familial abuse not because the doctor's lack the knowledge of PTSD but because the doctors ignore the mental instability that they all initially agree upon.

After this gross miscalculation of Billy's suffering, Eliot Rosewater introduces him to a literary escape. Rosewater being a "former infantry captain" and "tired of being drunk all the time" exists as the opposite of what Billy needs to understand and cope with his disease. Nevertheless,

> It was Rosewater who introduced Billy to science fiction … Rosewater was twice as smart as Billy, but he and Billy were dealing with similar crises in similar ways. They had both found life meaningless, partly because of what they had seen in war … So they were trying to reinvent themselves and their universe. Science fiction was a big help. (Vonnegut 100–01)

Vonnegut introduces two different types of wartime trauma in the pairing of Billy and Rosewater: "Rosewater … had shot a fourteen-year-old fireman, mistaking him for a German soldier … And Billy had seen the greatest massacre in European history" (Vonnegut 101). While Billy witnesses the slaughter of thousands of civilians, Rosewater kills one. Existing on a spectrum, both former soldiers cope with the scenes of a war-torn

world by using science fiction. Vonnegut reinforces that both Billy and Rosewater seek to escape the current world to relieve the mental stress of years of war. This form of coping seems out of place within a mental ward post-World War II, but it continues Vonnegut's use of humor and satire to drive literature as a form of medicine. Robert Scholes's review of *Slaughterhouse-Five* supports its use of comedy to squelch the burned images of dead civilians within the eyes of mentally ruined soldiers. He writes, "The humor in Vonnegut's fiction is what enables us to contemplate the horror that he finds in contemporary existence. It does not disguise the awful things perceived; it merely strengthens and comforts us to the point where such perception is bearable. Comedy can look into depths which tragedy dares not acknowledge. The comic is the only mode which can allow itself to contemplate absurdity" (Merrill 38). A comedic obsession with science fiction after surviving one of the deadliest wars in history "looks into depths which tragedy dares not acknowledge." Eliot Rosewater and Billy Pilgrim "contemplate absurdity" while realizing the depth of their emotional pain. Vonnegut sets this up within the novel's plot: He introduces Rosewater as a perverted mentor to Billy Pilgrim, Billy accepts and adopts Rosewater's obsession with sci-fi, Vonnegut casually introduces their roles within World War II, and their decision to "reinvent themselves and their universe … [through] science fiction" becomes a workable solution.

This solution continues to manifest in the way that Billy and Rosewater interact and react within the hospital environment. In one instance, Billy remembers Rosewater's flippant comment regarding the treatment of patients: "Billy heard Rosewater say to a psychiatrist, 'I think you guys are going to have to come up with a lot of wonderful *new* lies, or people just aren't going to want to go on living'" (Vonnegut 101). Rosewater's comment satirizes the symptoms of war, resulting in a comical plea for more and better treatments for the mental instability that both patients suffer from and critiquing the medical system through the view of an insane former captain, obsessed with science fiction. Robert Scholes concludes, "The truth of Vonnegut's vision requires its fiction," and Rosewater's claim stands at the forefront of this vision (Merrill 39). Literature as medicine fixes the problem that Rosewater finds so aggravating within the psychiatric field. The inability of tangible medicine or treatment to positively affect or reach those with PTSD results in the need for "*new* lies." However, literature—in Vonnegut's case—exists ironically as a fictional account as well as a truth much more potent than history. Robert Merrill and Peter A. Scholl suggest that "the need for supreme fictions is a very human trait … [, and] the need for such 'lies' [as Rosewater states] is almost universal in *Slaughterhouse-Five*" (Merrill 146). They offer the need for fiction as

well as lies, but I would argue that Vonnegut provides a universal truth through the fiction that arises well after Billy leaves the hospital: the "lies" of classic fiction offer greater healing and treatment for wounded minds than psychiatry and medical definition does.

THE MEDICINE AND TREATMENT

> "Time travel is Billy's therapy; his stories are his delusions."
> —Todd F. Davis in *Kurt Vonnegut's Crusade*

Throughout Billy's interactions with Rosewater and his stay in different hospitals, literature exists as both a type of treatment and a relapse. At the beginning of the fifth chapter, the Tralfamadorians transmit him to their planet. On the way, he asks for a book, and the Tralfamadorians give him *Valley of the Dolls* by Jacqueline Susann. After reading the fictional romance novel set in the post-war world of Broadway and Hollywood, Billy decides "he [doesn't] want to read about the same ups and downs over and over again [, and] he ask[s] if there [isn't], please, some other reading material around" (Vonnegut 87–88). This rejection of fiction begins the textual discussion of the proper medicine and treatment for Billy—which insinuates that a proper (and helpful) type of story exists. Billy asks about other literature on Tralfamadore, and the Tralfamadorians offer examples of their books. Billy describes them as "little things" with "clumps of symbols separated by stars," but Tralfamadorians describe their literature differently: "the author has chosen [the messages] carefully, so that, when seen all at once, they produce an image of life that is beautiful and surprising and deep … What we love in our books are the depths of many marvelous moments seen all at one time" (Vonnegut 88). This subtly mirrors Vonnegut's novel. The images of Billy's attempted healing "seen all at one time" produce an understanding of literature as a form of medicine and treatment—"an image … that is beautiful and surprising and deep."

Vonnegut also alludes to literature other than science fiction through the books that Edgar Derby reads in the Dresden hospital and the books that Rosewater reads while in the veteran's hospital. While Billy succumbs to the morphine pumped into him by the Englishmen, he notices Derby reading *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane. A book set during the American Civil War centering around a cowardly private who runs from the battlefield, the plot echoes Billy's own predicament and experience in World War II. Like Vonnegut's Billy Pilgrim, Crane's protagonist does not offer a brave and brawny hero, and Vonnegut's allusion to this text is not coincidental within Billy's trajectory. This allusion offers the first step during the treatment of PTSD: the acceptance of the disease. Vonnegut also offers another allusion to *The Brothers Karamazov* by Feodor Dostoevsky,

which Rosewater discusses with Billy in the hospital at Lake Placid. This novel, unlike Kilgore Trout's fiction, is highly acclaimed and delves into dynamic and universally relevant themes. Billy's remembrance of this discussion comes in between scenes of Rosewater's and his introduction in the hospital and Rosewater's statement that psychiatry needs "new lies" for its patients. This memory reads, "[Rosewater] said that everything there was to know about life was in *The Brothers Karamazov* … 'But that isn't *enough* any more'" (Vonnegut 101). Rosewater's assertion that a work of literary merit fails to be sufficient after supposedly knowing everything about life offers an assumption that noteworthy literature once helped and healed Rosewater but, after his introduction to Kilgore Trout, seems inadequate. Vonnegut counters this by the plot summary of one of Trout's books: "The book was *Maniacs in the Fourth Dimension* … It was about people whose mental diseases couldn't be treated because the causes of the diseases were all in the fourth dimension, and three-dimensional Earthling doctors couldn't see those causes at all, or even imagine them" (Vonnegut 104). Both Rosewater and Billy are (metaphorically) maniacs in a different dimension because of the doctor's lack of knowledge about the mental disease they suffer from, and Vonnegut uses the plot of a terrible novel to highlight the fact that people in different mental dimensions would of course fail to treat this disease properly. Vonnegut also poses this as a metaphor for the literature that Billy and Rosewater read. Science fiction, or the types that these battle-sickened men deem worthy, is not sufficient medicine for a disease outside of its realm. Vonnegut shows this through the private library under Rosewater's bed: "[He] had a tremendous collection of science-fiction paperbacks under his bed … Those beloved, frumpish books gave off a smell that permeated the ward—like flannel pajamas that hadn't been changed for a month, or like Irish stew" (Vonnegut 100). Vonnegut deems his collection inadequate medication through its permeating stench. The "flannel pajamas" need to be changed, and the "Irish stew" needs to be thrown out. Comparatively, if they suffer from a *Karamazov*-like disease, they need a *Karamazov*-like treatment.

THE CURE

> "The trip has simplified the war book for me. *Slaughterhouse-5*, since I have now seen with my own eyes what I was trying to remember."
> —Kurt Vonnegut (in a letter to Sam Lawrence in October 1967)

An adequate treatment for the mental horrors that Billy faces throughout the remainder of Vonnegut's novel exists within the novel itself. Just as the vaccine introduces the body to a weaker strain of the disease it prevents, *Slaughterhouse-Five* becomes the immune system that Billy needs.

The immune system, ironically, fights Billy's PTSD through the reader's exposure to his madness—a slow injection but a quick needle-breaking of the skin.

The slow injection may begin with Vonnegut's many references to literature, both notable and terrible, but it continues with Billy's own story of his time on Tralfamadore. Wayne D. McGinnis argues that "[Vonnegut's novel] insists on both the world of fiction or fantasy (Tralfamadore) and the world of brutal fact (Dresden). [It] urges the primacy of the imagination in the very act of facing [history]" (Mustazza 113). Tralfamadore is, ultimately, not just Billy's fantasy but Vonnegut's literary stitching up of the gaping holes that typical science fiction failed to sew together for Billy Pilgrim. This setting offers an escape from reality and provides Billy with an outlet to understand and cope with his trauma. Rosewater says, "Jesus—if Kilgore Trout could only *write*!" to which the narrator adds, "[His] unpopularity was deserved. His prose was frightful. Only his ideas were good" (Vonnegut 110). Vonnegut himself, in his early writing career, was dubbed a science fiction writer—before critics started viewing his novels as black humor. J. Michael Crichton assures, however, that "there is … some business about a distant planet and flying saucers, but that doesn't make the book science fiction, any more than flippers make a cat a penguin. In the final analysis the book is hideous, ghastly, murderous—and calm. There are just people, doing what people usually do to each other" (Mustazza 111). Billy's stay on Tralfamadore reveals the "calm" of the "hideous, ghastly, murderous" images of World War II.

After another scene in the Lake Placid hospital, Billy travels forward in time (now forty-four years old) to his fictional planet. They keep him in a zoo, which mirrors another hospital. The Tralfamadorians place Billy "on display under a geodesic dome," "on a lounge chair," "naked" (Vonnegut 111). Billy's location sounds similar to a perverted therapy session. Since "Earth [is] 446,120,000,000,000,000 miles away" from Tralfamadore, Billy enters a mental space where he can deal with the trauma and tragedy of war. "There were no walls in the dome, no place for Billy to hide," which insinuates the potential for total recovery (Vonnegut 112). Incidentally, Tralfamadore becomes the only setting within the novel that Billy experiences any chance of full healing.

This healing comes when Billy introduces the Tralfamadorians to the atrocities of World War II. Being one of the only times he discusses these scenes verbally as opposed to inwardly, he praises their people for being so peaceful and says, "I am from a planet that has been engaged in senseless slaughter since the beginning of time. I myself have seen the bodies of schoolgirls who were boiled alive in a water tower by my own countrymen … I have lit my way in a prison at night with candles from the fat of human

beings" (Vonnegut 116). Billy admits the horrors he experiences, and this initiates his healing. His therapy continues with a conversation between Billy and the Tralfamadorians, in which they explain the fundamental issue with Earthlings:

> 'So—' said Billy gropingly, 'I suppose that the idea of preventing war on Earth is stupid, too.'
> 'Of course.'
> 'But you *do* have a peaceful planet here.'
> 'Today we do. On other days we have wars as horrible as any you've ever seen or read about. There isn't anything we can do about them, so … we spend eternity looking at pleasant moments … That's one thing Earthlings might learn to do, if they tried hard enough: Ignore the awful times, and concentrate on the good ones.' (Vonnegut 117)

Through Billy's personal fantasy, which everyone else considers crazy, Vonnegut gives one of the best pieces of advice in the entire novel—the advice that would most help Billy and the advice that he so often subconsciously ignores. While Billy heals on Tralfamadore through talking about his trauma, the people offer a simple solution to continued healing: "concentrate on the good." This cure, for Billy, comes in the form of his fantasy, while this cure, for Vonnegut, comes in the form of his fiction.

THE HEALING

> "There were hundreds of corpse mines operating … And somewhere in there was springtime … World War Two in Europe was over. Billy and the rest wandered out onto the shady street. The trees were leafing out … Birds were talking."
> —Kurt Vonnegut (from *Slaughterhouse-Five*)

In the introduction to *Armageddon in Retrospect*, a book of previously unpublished work by Kurt Vonnegut, Mark Vonnegut says—concerning his father's fiction:

> Reading and writing are in themselves subversive acts. What they subvert is the notion that things have to be the way they are, that you are alone, that no one has ever felt the way you have. What occurs to people when they read Kurt is that things are much more up for grabs than they thought they were. The world is a slightly different place just because they read a damn book. (Vonnegut, *Armageddon* 6)

Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* makes the world of war trauma "a slightly different place." He allows Billy to admit his trauma, therein admitting his

own. In the world of mental disorders, these are "subversive acts," which disrupt the system of blind participation in governmental structures and critique an entire era of inadequate medical diagnosis. Vonnegut brings to the surface the horrors not yet spoken in his way—those that other literature either ignores or champions. Wayne D. McGinnis concludes, "[*Slaughterhouse-Five*] is like the Tralfamadorian novel, a novel without beginning, middle, and end, without suspense and without a moral. Like … Roethke['s "The Waking"], it learns by going where it has to go" (Mustazza 120). He argues that Vonnegut's novel is itself a renewal—just like therapy. The novel must delve into the raw, untouched, still-bleeding cuts. The novel must expose the atrocity to see the arrival of springtime. By the end of the novel, the reader does not feel certain that Billy reaches complete recovery, but that he copes with his issues. "World War Two in Europe was over … trees were leafing … birds were talking," and Vonnegut ends his anti-war masterpiece with a picture of renewal as well as dead bodies and corpse mines. He leaves the reader with a balance of horror and peace: the true cure for the chronic illness of trauma.

CHYNA GOWAN is a graduate student at the University of West Georgia who received her B.A. in English in December 2018. She is interested in eventually pursuing a PhD and would love to continue researching and writing both creatively and analytically. She is a staff editor for *LURe* and has also represented the English Department in multiple conferences (including NCUR) and has received multiple awards within the department. She truly loves to write and could not imagine a world without it.

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The Empire's Excess: The Bright Young People and Aristocratic Title in *Vile Bodies*

Landen J. Kleisinger, University of Regina

To readers, the Bright Young People seemed ahead of their time, keeping mixed company, openly exhibiting their sexuality, and defying old notions of moral standards. Featured prominently in Britain's Post-War tabloids, they engaged and shocked the masses. Contemporary readers continue to be infatuated with their exploits through Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies,* the principal portrayal of the group and their sensational affairs in England during the Roaring Twenties. However, to many of these readers, this very sensationalization, the depiction of the glamorous and exciting lifestyle of the Bright Young People, has overshadowed the parodic nature of the work. While *Vile Bodies* is centered around the Bright Young People, it provides a scathing critique of the group, characteristic of Waugh's satirical style. Given the devaluation of aristocratic title in Post-War Britain, rather than lead society, the Bright Young People are depicted by Waugh as struggling to meaningfully participate in it. Waugh frames Shepheard's Hotel to symbolize the decline of the aristocracy and the importance of title following the Great War. The metaphor of the motor race, moreover, demonstrates the Bright Young People's reversion to old notions of aristocratic title in the pursuit of work. The interchangeability of columnists who publish under the name Mr. Chatterbox further displays the Bright Young People's desire to abandon title, and with it their aristocratic identity, in order to enter working life. Finally, the narrator indifferently reports on the Bright Young People, concluding that they have no place in a new Britain that values merit. In a parodic, unsentimental depiction of the Bright Young People, Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies* details the group's desire to in-

voke, and consequent need to revoke, title for the pursuit of work, conveying the emptiness of title within a society esteeming merit.

Britain in the 1920s was an age of glamor, and glamor was achieved through the press. D. J. Taylor's cultural history, *The Bright Young People,* serves as the principal examination of this period and the group that captured its headlines. The Bright Young People, Taylor argues, offered daily entertainment to thousands of middle-class readers who gawked at their escapades (15). Kerrie Holloway has expanded upon Taylor's study, emphasizing that this young generation, largely aristocratic by birth, was in fact on the fringes of society; they were not the stars of the nation, for they hardly participated in it. Failing to adapt to a Post-War economic, political, and social environment, which saw their aristocratic titles depreciate, they "chose creative alternatives to maintain the party-going and party-throwing lifestyle of their aristocratic ancestors" (Holloway 317). However, despite these nuanced historical critiques, many literary scholars have persisted with the notion that Waugh's depiction of the Bright Young People in *Vile Bodies* glamorizes the period. Marius Hentea, for example, is uncritical of the Bright Young People's "sensationalistic legacy" (91), arguing that Evelyn Waugh's depiction of the group in *Vile Bodies* is sentimental, not parodic. Waugh's depiction of the group in *Vile Bodies,* however, can be more appropriately characterized as criticism rather than admiration. While Waugh was on the fringes of this group, and *Vile Bodies* is considered their definitive literary exposé, the work is a scathing parody of Britain's young aristocratic class (Taylor 7–8). In arguing this, the reading of *Vile Bodies* explored here seeks to expand upon the ideas of cultural historians like Holloway and Taylor, filling the gaps left by literary scholars who have yet to holistically examine Waugh's disdain for the Bright Young People.

Waugh first frames his critique of the Bright Young People with Shepheard's hotel. Outliving the values under which it was constructed, Shepheard's Hotel serves as a parodic symbol of the aristocracy's decline in Post-War Britain. The Great War transformed Britain in numerous ways, namely reducing the role of the aristocracy in British society. Symbolically, Shepheard's Hotel serves as both a shrine and a refuge for deposed aristocracy. Photographs of monarchs and nobles adorn the walls in a quasi-religious celebration of lost imperial heritage (Waugh 38–39). The same walls house ousted and forgotten aristocrats, like the "ex-King of Ruritania" (43), an allusion to Ruritanian romantic literature that features tales of European royalty. Illustrating the decline of the ex-King of Ruritania and by extension the class he represents, the speaker quips that the ex-King, deposed after the War, had to be driven around by the hotel's proprietress to avoid traveling third-class by rail (41). Reflecting on Shepheard's Hotel, Hentea notes that the speaker portrays its guests

as "deposed royals [and] aristocrats turned hustlers, [the] empire's left-overs," detailing that "the decrepit building is a sad commentary on the aristocracy's decline" (95). While Hentea is correct in his analysis of the building's symbolic significance, he attributes Waugh's depiction of the aristocracy's decline as a lament for "missing out" (107) on much of the excitement of the period. He neglects to note that there is scarcely a positive depiction of the hotel's guests worth emulating and admiring. The parodic fall of ex-King of Ruritania, for example, is comically portrayed in his need to travel by third-class train. Despite his title, he exhibits few qualifications to rule a country, opting instead to medicate with liquor and live off the pity of monarchist sympathizers (Waugh 43). In Post-War Britain, the standing of aristocrats and the titles that followed them carried little weight in determining their social status or profession. Critical of those housed within its walls, Shepheard's Hotel frames a societal shift away from the ascribed importance of title in Britain.

The metaphor of the motor race and Agatha's parodic participation in it, moreover, demonstrates the Bright Young People's desire to invoke title as a means of work, failing to recognize its hollowness in a changed society. In drawing a parallel between Chapter 10's motor race and the progression of life in Post-War Britain, the speaker of *Vile Bodies* personifies cars, insisting that they have a "definite 'being,' just as much as [their] occupants" (Waugh 191). The car, like the individual at its wheel, exists "solely for … propulsion through space" (192), moving, often precariously, from point A to point B in a race and event to event in life. Since the Pre-War aristocracy's paths were predetermined by title at birth, this left little need for agency in determining where point B might be. Those at the motor race "who gave off an air of sobriety and purpose" and belonged "to the middle rank" (194) historically had no such luxury, forced to determine their lives irrespective of title. Conversely, when Agatha is provided the opportunity to drive in the race, like an aristocrat entering working life, she reverts to title to justify the work, saying, "I'm the spare driver … it's on my arm" (207). In a parodic and robotic fashion, she further defers to her title in all subsequent interactions:

> 'All right. What's your name?'
> 'Agatha. I'm the spare driver. It's on my arm.'
> 'I can see it is—all right, start off as soon as you like.'
> 'Agatha,' repeated Miss Runcible firmly as she climbed into the car. 'It's on my arm.'
> 'I say, Agatha,' said Adam. 'Are you sure you're all right?'
> 'It's on my arm,' said Miss Runcible severely. (208)

In attempting to justify her entrance into working life, Agatha invokes her title, not recognizing that in Post-War Britain it means little compared to qualifications such as skill or experience. Despite continually and comically justifying her supposed qualification because "it's on [her] arm," her participation in the race is marred by failure, simultaneously leading to her death and calling into question the merit of her title. This showcases a group captive to society, trapped between new social standards denying them work and conservative ideals attempting to justify their work. Although she attempts to obtain the privilege provided to her ancestors by invoking her title, Agatha, like the class she represents, is only able to use title to mask her inability to function in working life.

The interchangeability of authors who publish under the name Mr. Chatterbox, moreover, demonstrates the newfound disposability and anonymity bequeathed to the Bright Young People when they are forced to revoke their titles to *meaningfully* enter working life. The speaker, for example, comically ridicules aristocratic title:

> At Archie Schwert's party the fifteenth Marquess of Vanburgh, Earl Vanburgh de Brendon, Baron of Brendon, Lord of the Five Isles and Hereditary Grand Falconer to the Kingdom of Connaught, said to the eighth Earl of Balcairn, Viscount Erdinge, Baron Cairn of Balcairn, Red Knight of Lancaster, Count of the Holy Roman Empire and Chenonceaux Herald to the Duchy of Aquitaine, 'Hullo,' he said. 'Isn't this a repulsive party? What are you going to say about it?' for they were both of them, as it happened, gossip writers for the daily papers. (54)

Here, the speaker initiates a conversation between two seemingly noble individuals, exaggerating the extent of their prestige, only to reduce them to gossip writers. While Simon, Earl of Balcairn, holds lofty titles, he is seemingly anonymous in a society that does not recognize his birth, ascribing him the career of Mr. Chatterbox. When committing suicide, the last Earl of Balcairn dies without the glory of his ancestors, "who had fallen in many lands and for many causes … at Acre and Agincourt and Killiecrankie, in Egypt and America" (125). As if he is completely disposable, "the most fungible of commodities" as Damon Marcel DeCoste has aptly remarked (15), Adam quickly assumes his role, as do others after Adam. Neill Johnson further notes that when a disguised Simon is caught at Lady Metroland's party, "the ostensible reason for Rothschild's disappointment is his eagerness to be enmeshed in international espionage, but the real disappointment results from the discovery that there is nothing behind the mask but a blank, empty space" (13). Mr. Chat-

terbox is representative of the transition the Bright Young People face when entering working life. Substituting their title and identity for the title of Mr. Chatterbox, they work without noteworthiness like everyone else, ascribing them "blank" and "empty" identities where prestigious title once reigned. Satirically, Waugh portrays this "blank" identity as the only profession that the Bright Young People can hold, and to their dismay, they do not hold it for long.

Waugh's ultimate use of satire in critiquing the Bright Young People and their void of ability hidden by aristocratic title comes in the narrator's own reliance on title in depicting them, emphasizing their null function in society. The complexity of narrative technique in *Vile Bodies* stands as one of the novel's most analyzed and discussed features. Booke Allen has notably characterized the narration as a modernist experiment (318). However, while Allen notes the narrator's "intrusive" characteristics (318), DeCoste takes this analysis a step further and characterizes the narrator as a gossip columnist, reporting on the lives of the book's characters (DeCoste 21). DeCoste argues that "Waugh's Chatterbox narrator … [does] not shirk the task of tracing title and pedigree … defining character solely in terms of title and function" (21). Agatha, for example, is often introduced throughout the novel as an heir of the "Chasm" family (Waugh 24). Lord Rothschild is noted as the heir to "at one time the fifteenth richest man in the world" (38). Crowds of Bright Young People at parties are frequently depicted as a "great concourse of pious and honorable people … their women-folk well gowned in rich and durable stuffs, their men-folk ablaze with orders" (149). What DeCoste neglects to note, however, is that these depictions emphasize title while neglecting function. Just as the tabloids within *Vile Bodies* are completely fictionalized, spewing entertainment without merit, so too the narrator of the novel reports on characters by only highlighting their titles. Akin to Adam's fictionalized characters within the Daily Excess, the Bright Young People of *Vile Bodies* cannot be richly detailed by the narrator as there is nothing to elaborate upon. They are hollow shells, lacking merit, skill, ability, and experience. All they hold is title, which defines them, but does not make up for a lack of other practical qualities.

One only needs to look at the narrator's indifferent reporting of the Bright Young People to determine the tragic consequence of their reliance on title. Flossie Ducane's fatal drunken plummet from a chandelier is taken as an inconvenience by her friends, not as a tragedy (67). Agatha's death in the hospital following her car crash is overshadowed in the press by a "large party" in her room (288). Nina is compelled into a relationship and family she does not want because her title is now worthless without her inheritance (266–67). Following the onset of World War II, Adam is essentially abandoned on the battlefield, powerless to

the "circling typhoon, the sounds of battle [that began] to return" (271). These seemingly tragic accounts, hardly emphasized by the narrator, are explained in the context of satire by Jonathan Daniel Greenberg's *Modernism, Satire, and the Novel.* Greenberg notes that the narrator satirically depicts death and loss "in laconic, undemonstrative, or ironically amused language … Despite this emotional restraint, affect abounds in *Vile Bodies*—it just exists in the wrong places" (54). Satirically, while the reader may empathize with the casualties of *Vile Bodies,* the narrator does not, seeing them as "nonexistent people and false names" (59). A reliance on title in a society that demands ability becomes the inevitable downfall of this young aristocratic class. Ironically, in an older age their deaths would have been revered and mourned. Here, they are not. With the undramatic conclusions of the novel's characters, the narrator indifferently reports the first casualties of a period in British history that came to redefine status in merit, not title. The Bright Young People were no longer exceptional but archaic for the age in which they lived, a society that prioritized qualification over birth. Qualification, in any meaningful or practical sense, was foreign to the Bright Young People, and title obscured this fact. The narrator exhibits little emotion because he or she likely feel none, critical of the Bright Young People and their inherent lack of value outside of tabloid entertainment.

Contrary to the work of literary scholars, such as Marius Hentea, who have neglected to note the parodic intentions of *Vile Bodies*, Waugh's novel utilizes the symbol of Shepheard's Hotel, the metaphor of the motor race, the Mr. Chatterbox authors, and an indifferent narrator to depict, without sentiment, the Bright Young People who exhibit little value in Post-War Britain. Additionally, many popular readers of Waugh's work, in both Post-War Britain and today, have been awed by the sensational exploits of the Bright Young People: the emphasis given to lavish parties, fast cars, sexual liberalism, and riches has often clouded critical examination of *Vile Bodies*, obscuring its parodic intention. The reading of *Vile Bodies* presented here attempts to fill these gaps in literary scholarship and popular historical consciousness by examining Waugh's novel as a satirical slander of the Bright Young People and the age in which they lived. Expanding beyond Waugh's depiction of the Bright Young People, such an approach to the text allows contemporary readers to critically re-examine the Roaring Twenties more broadly, a period "roaring" not only in the pursuit of fame and pleasure, but in the agony of dissociation and uselessness. As such, Waugh's work is of use to historians, literary critics, and popular readers who seek to question facades of glamor, historically and in their own lives, to unmask emptiness and despair where it is least expected.

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"A French Dancer's Bastard": Imperialism, Girlhood, and Adèle Varens in Brontë's *Jane Eyre*

Claudia McCarron, Shepherd University

Considering *Jane Eyre*'s reputation as "one of the period's most famous governess novels" (Poovey 129), there is a surprising lack of critical attention given to Adèle Varens, the young girl under Jane's charge. A French girl of dubious parentage, Adèle represents the confluence of the novel's anxieties concerning nationhood, colonialism, and girlhood that become the key to the contradictions, slippages, and reversals that occur when these anxieties invariably meet. Until recently, however, she has been either ignored or reviled by critics, who tend to read her as insignificant at best or a sexualized pawn at worst. Perhaps the most extensive of the latter type of analysis can be found in Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* where they characterize Adèle as one of the "negative 'role-models'" Charlotte Brontë puts forth for Jane, condemning her as "a model female in a world of prostitutes" (350). Excoriating as such criticism is, it does acknowledge the deep ambivalence the text and Brontë herself seem to feel toward the girl. While Adèle's status as an abandoned girl-child does bring to mind the trials and tribulations undergone by the similarly parentless Jane, her Frenchness acts as a "constant reminder of the intrusion of the Continent" (Duthie 131) in a manner strikingly similar to the anxieties of imperialism and colonialism provoked by Bertha Mason, Rochester's insane wife.

Adèle's position as a nationally othered girl draws her into close association with both Jane and Bertha, who act as her explicit and implicit mother figures, highlighting the precarious dichotomy of Englishness versus Otherness that Adèle embodies. Marianne Hirsch has pointed out that "Family

structures" within Brontë's novel "can … be used as metaphors of colonial relations" (168), and Adèle's maternal relationships in *Jane Eyre* develop along the lines of an imperial continuum characterized by Jane's independent Englishness on one end and Bertha's colonial madness on the other. Adèle stands poised between these two extremes, a liminal figure who exists at the joining points of girlhood, imperialism, and nationalism, embodying the ideological slippage that results when these disparate but connected concerns meet. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the instances of contradiction and unease that Adèle provokes, first through an examination of the importance of post-colonialism and girlhood studies to Victorian studies, and then through a deeper consideration and analysis of Adèle herself.

INTERSECTIONS: COLONIALISM AND GIRLHOOD

It is impossible to understand Adèle's position in *Jane Eyre* without understanding Rochester's first wife, Bertha Mason. The Creole madwoman acts as the complete opposite of the plain, understated Jane, even as both take on maternal roles in relation to Adèle as part of the novel's reliance on an imperialist family structure. Bertha embodies the wildness, rage, and sexual proclivities England associated with its colonized peoples at the same time she questions whether these characteristics are consequences of, rather than reasons for, colonialism and, as Carolyn Berman suggests, "instantiates colonial unfitness to rule" (143). Her eventual fiery death shows an ideological inability to grapple with questions of imperialism when they collide with the principles at the heart of the British Empire: concerns of economics, inheritance, and, perhaps most explosively, the structures of love and family.

The compelling series of questions, contradictions, and slippages that Bertha provokes transfers to Adèle when examining the novel through the lens of childhood and girlhood studies. The importance of children in the nineteenth century has been widely studied, with many critics asserting that the Victorian literary childhood served "as a vehicle for social commentary" (Coveney 92). This broad category includes issues of gender, economics, and class, and when examining Victorian girlhood it is the "Exploitation and exclusion" (Banerjee, "Ambivalence" 481) of children that often strikes readers of nineteenth-century literature as painfully apparent. Jacqueline Banerjee shows how girlhood became a highly contested, "sometimes vicious arena for opposing ideas about women's roles" (*Through* 110). Nineteenth-century writers struggled to define young women's purposes both within and without the family, and in the process articulated viewpoints that were both traditional and progressive.

In its opening chapters, *Jane Eyre* illustrates a startling revision of girlhood that is later complicated by the novel's reliance on the imperial family

structure. Jane's rage against the Reeds' cruelty and her blistering critique of "the very thought of you makes me sick … you treated me with miserable cruelty" (Brontë 35) certainly embodies the social commentary that critics have noted, but it does so with a vitriolic intensity that seems incompatible with the "domestic and spiritual values" (Banerjee, *Through* 111) that many of Brontë's contemporaries advocated for young girls. On the contrary, Jane embodies an unforgiving, psychologically, and ideologically searing form of girlhood that acts as an apt critique of religious and moral hypocrisy, which also finds voice in the saintly Helen Burns, and, despite the text's best efforts, *Jane Eyre*'s other notable girl-child, Adèle Varens.

The reason for Adèle's attempted exclusion from the ranks of Brontë's prophetic girls rests in her connection to English nationalism and imperialism. Her association with Bertha draws Adèle dangerously close to the problems of otherness and colonialism that the woman represents. However, her corresponding relationship with Jane insists on Adèle's autonomy and value as a young girl. Within the socially significant landscape of girlhood that Brontë creates, it is impossible for Adèle not to illuminate the inconsistencies and hypocrisies surrounding her, even as the text denies her the interiority afforded to its other girls. Despite her literary and critical marginalization, she functions as a powerful symbol of the contradictions of imperialism and empire when it is forced to reckon with girlhood, and, by extension, the very bedrock of Victorian society: the structure of the home and family. Such a reading of Adèle reveals tremendous anxieties concerning imperialism, otherness, and its effect on the women and girls responsible for both supporting and creating the families at the heart of the British Empire.

TRUE DAUGHTERS AND THEIR INFAMOUS MOTHERS

Adèle's liminal position within the imperialist worldview of the novel is best understood within the bounds of the family structure, and, more specifically, the maternal bonds binding her to both Jane Eyre and Bertha Mason. As her governess, it is understandable that Jane would share a familial, albeit complicated, relationship with Adèle. More mysterious, but equally important, is Adèle's connection to Bertha, a figure who she never meets and may not even be aware of. The maternal relationship between the two establishes itself through a variety of natural and artificial parallels that link Adèle to the imprisoned madwoman, involving her in the questions of colonialism and imperialism that Bertha represents.

Biographical similarities tie Bertha and Adèle to a similar heritage of otherness and suspicion. Rochester's slur that Bertha is "the true daughter of an infamous mother" (Brontë 274) can just as easily be applied to Adèle, as

they both share what Mara Reisman refers to as "sexual and national taints" (129) that Rochester attributes to Bertha. Bertha's Creole mother was "shut up in a lunatic asylum" (Brontë 274), but her legacy of madness is passed on to her daughter, manifesting not only in mental instability and uncontrollable rage, but also in sexual indiscretions that muddy her autonomy and personhood even further. Adèle hails from a similar background of excess and vice. Her mother, Céline, is "a French opera-dancer" (128) who is as accomplished in the dubious talents of singing, recitation, and dancing as she is in seducing and exploiting powerful men. Rochester describes his "grande passion" (128) for Céline with the same scornful bitterness he later uses to describe his courtship and marriage to Bertha, remarking that he "trod the old track with stupid exactness" (129). Like Bertha, Céline is "intemperate and unchaste" and these "giant propensities" (274) lead her to entangle herself in another affair that causes Rochester to once again realize that "to live familiarly with inferiors is degrading" (279). Both Céline and Bertha's mother become the embodiments of national otherness: Céline of the sexual depravity and superficiality of France, and Mrs. Mason of colonial madness and all its attendant vices. Both bequeath a legacy of otherness onto their daughters, whether that legacy is realized, as in the case of Bertha, or merely attributed, as in the case of Adèle. Moreover, since Rochester's mistresses are all, in one form or another, replacements for Bertha, Bertha becomes Adèle's mother by proxy, further compounding the girl's burden of otherness.

More subtle parallels link Adèle's national otherness to the colonial madness and otherness evinced by Bertha. Adèle's Frenchness is readily apparent to all of the novel's characters because of her difficulty in mastering English. Indeed, Brontë represents much of her dialogue in untranslated French,[1] and Mrs. Fairfax remarks to Jane that "I don't understand her, she mixes it so with French" (93). In fact, Adèle has only three people in Thornfield who she can easily communicate with: her nurse, Sophie, an undeveloped and rarely mentioned "foreigner" (93), Mr. Rochester, and Jane. Since Rochester is often absent from Thornfield and shows little interest in Adèle when he is on the premises, Adèle must depend on Jane for most of her communication. As she tells Jane at their first meeting, "you speak my language as well as Mr. Rochester does: I can talk to you as I can to him" (93). Her mention of Rochester is significant. Jane acts as translator for Adèle, interpreting and presenting her to an English audience in much the same manner that Rochester interprets and presents Bertha. Like Adèle, Bertha cannot be understood by the majority of the novel's characters, but her language barrier is even more fundamentally alienating. Upon seeing Bertha in the attic, Jane likens her to a "clothed hyena" who "snatched and growled like some wild animal" (263). Bertha literally speaks in the language of animals,

leaving her with only one interpreter: Rochester, her husband and captor. Like Jane, Rochester becomes the speaker for an othered character, but unlike Jane he bends his subject entirely to his own will. Rochester fashions Bertha into the soulless, threatening other he and English society believe her to be rather than allowing her the expressional autonomy Jane gives to Adèle. He insists that Bertha is a "demon" (263) and denies her even corporeal authenticity when he contrasts her with Jane: "Compare … this face with that mask" (263). Bertha is denied a voice and body worthy of respect by Rochester on the basis of her colonial background and mental health, all of which are conceptualized and illustrated through her Creole history. This rhetoric of exclusion and control on the basis of national and linguistic identity finds its echo in Adèle's inescapable Frenchness, further identifying her with Bertha.

Taken to its figurative extreme, the language of exclusion and other-ness that surrounds Bertha marks her as racialized figure, associating Adèle even more deeply with the imperial and colonial concerns of the British Empire. As critics have noted, Bertha is consistently described in a manner that draws attention to her dark complexion and stereotypically African characteristics despite her ostensibly white identity. On their first meeting, Rochester was impressed by her "tall, dark, and majestic bearing" (273). Later, after her features have been corrupted by madness, she is depicted as "discoloured" and "savage" with a "purple" complexion and a "fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments" (254). These physical descriptors, along with Bertha's murderous rage, become "the fiction's incarnation of … colonized peoples," as well as reminiscent of colonial rebellion in the West Indies (Meyer 69). Adèle is implicated in this racialization through her existing connections with Bertha and through her identity as a female child. Cora Kaplan has demonstrated how many nineteenth-century writ-ers "articulated identification with other races" in their portrayals of female childhood (172). Adèle's connection with Bertha causes her to take part in this identification, and "racially mark[s]" (195) her as a subject of colonial oppression and imperial suspicion.

The text's most explicit articulation of Adèle's otherness and kinship to Bertha come from Rochester's reactions to her. Although occasionally tem-pered by kindness, his attitude towards the girl is markedly similar to the disgust and dismissiveness he directs towards Bertha. Like his wife, Adèle is a burden foisted on him by a paternalistic strain of imperialism. His status as a civilized Englishman forces him to claim responsibility for her health and well-being. He tells Jane sardonically that he "took the poor thing out of the slime and mud of Paris, and transplanted it here, to grow up clean in the wholesome soil of an English country garden" (132). As these words imply, Rochester shows as much distrust of Adèle's unclean French iden-

tity as he does of Bertha's mad Creole one, and this distrust manifests in his stubborn refusal to acknowledge the girl as his child: "I see no proofs of such grim paternity written in her countenance" (132). He takes every opportunity to remind others that Adèle is merely "a French dancer's bastard" (270) who holds no claim on him apart from his goodwill. These denials mirror his insistence that Bertha's madness and depravity preclude him from any spousal obligation to her, no matter the societal expectations (263–64). Rochester's dismissal of Adèle combines with and compounds her relationship to Bertha in a manner that works to represent Adèle as a national and colonial other reviled for her background and abandoned by British society.

At first, Adèle's relationship with Jane, her other mother figure, would appear to be less threatening to nineteenth-century readers than her connection to Bertha. The two are drawn together by shared childhood experiences and a thematic preoccupation with girlhood rather than the potentially explosive questions of imperialism and colonialism Bertha provokes. A closer reading, however, reveals how this conflation leads to further questioning and condemnation of the novel's imperial ideology, a pressure which ultimately fractures the text.

As mentioned earlier, Brontë imbues her female children with tremendous power and authority to critique and destabilize existing societal and moral norms. This reliance on girlhood as a space of empowerment and authority is most prominently seen in the course the novel charts from Jane's downtrodden orphanhood to her future as an independent and happily married woman. Brontë makes it clear that it is Jane's unflinching appraisal of human nature and strength of character, honed and tempered by the injustice and hypocrisy that she witnessed at Gateshead Hall and Lowood school, that allow her to grow into the principled, self-assured figure she is at the novel's end. In the process, Brontë, via Jane, creates a space for the novel's other abandoned, disenfranchised girls to voice their feelings of injustice and persecution, whether explicitly or implicitly. Equally important to Brontë's conception of condemnatory girlhood is the justification Jane claims when she lashes out at her aunt. When Mrs. Reed asks how she "dare … affirm" her condemnations, Jane responds "Because it is the *truth*" (35). In the world of *Jane Eyre*, young girls are not only permitted to voice their feelings, these feelings are also endorsed, becoming emblematic of injustices far beyond the reach of their experience. Adèle's girlhood brings her into the fold of Brontë's visionary children, a position that is only strengthened by her ties to the novel's most significant visionary girl, Jane Eyre.

The child-Jane's quiet, brooding nature would seem to contrast with the vivacious, conversational Adèle to begin with. However, the two are bound

together by a shared history of familial abandonment and isolation. Looking back at her childhood in Gateshead Hall, the adult Jane recognizes that "I was a discord … I was like nobody there" (17). Her plain appearance, introversion, and barely concealed anger do nothing to relate her to her more happy, spoiled cousins, while the fact that she was the favorite of her deceased uncle rankles with her aunt so deeply that she does everything in her power to debase and punish Jane. In language that shows the lingering impact of their abuse, Jane muses "They were not bound to regard with affection a thing that could not sympathize with one amongst them" (17). This evaluation is echoed by Rochester when he uses their differing temperaments to justify his lack of paternal feelings for Adèle, remarking that his dog is "more like me than she" (132). In fact, Adèle behaves in many ways as the mirror image of Jane: a "sanguine … handsome, romping child" (17) at odds with her Byronic father figure, his self-abasing manner, and the Gothic secrets that surround him. Furthermore, as with Mrs. Reed, there is a deeper resentment behind Rochester's apathy. Adèle reminds him of his sordid affairs and debauched past, as evidenced by his remark that she is "a miniature of Céline Varens, as she used to appear" (127). Like Jane, Adèle suffers under her guardian's unkindness, and even voices her unhappiness on occasion. She shows none of young Jane's fiery discontent and disgust towards the Reeds—indeed, she continues to idolize Rochester and seek his attention in a manner that is nothing short of poignant—but she does admit that his abandonment causes her pain, saying "he has not kept his word … I never see him" (95). Alexandra Valint notes that, despite the fact that Adèle hides "her feelings of rejection and displacement with a jovial attitude," she still manages to critique Rochester's treatment of her (208). In this passage, Adèle evinces the diplomacy it took Jane ten years to learn at Lowood. Recognizing Rochester as her sole supporter, she abandons outright anger for a more veiled politeness that allows her to express her grievances while still keeping her place at Thornfield Hall.

Their similarities cause Jane to identify with Adèle, and draw close to her in a manner that marks Adèle as the potential successor for Jane's rebellious, reformatory girlhood. When Rochester asks if Adèle's history will cause Jane to "think differently" of her, she passionately replies that "Adèle is not answerable for either her mother's faults or yours" and "now that I know that she is, in a sense parentless … I shall cling closer to her than before" (Brontë 132). Looking between the lines, readers can see Jane's memories of her own forsaken childhood, and her promise to "cling" to Adèle finds a literal manifestation the night before her marriage to Rochester. Lying in Adèle's nursery, she holds the girl in her arms and realizes that she is "the emblem of my past life" (257). Adèle becomes both a daughter figure and

a doppelgänger for Jane, providing a way for her to exorcise the demons of her past while also acknowledging Adèle's value and personhood.

Jane's identification with Adèle does not preclude her attempts to make the girl more English. Early on, she shows a dislike for Adèle's talents in singing, dancing, and recitation—the qualities that the text represents as the most "French" and opposed to Jane's quiet, inward-gazing Englishness. She finds Adèle's singing "in very bad taste" since it tells the story of an abandoned lover and pedantically tells the girl that she "think[s] too much" about clothing when they are dressing to meet Rochester's houseguests (94, 154). Like Bertha, Adèle's status as other marks her as "a target for moral-imperial intervention" (Berman 131), and Jane's attempts to correct what she sees as continental flaws in her pupil's disposition demonstrate the inescapability of the British Empire's ideology of imperialism. As Deirdre David points out, "Jane is an adept discursive participant in Victorian justification of British control" (78). The reason for this adeptness is that, while she is a capable critic of English religious and gender norms, Jane rarely looks outside of the boundaries of the British Isles to the larger-scale persecutions these norms enable in colonized countries. Indeed, she views the prospect of missionary work in India as a death sentence. Jane constructs Englishness as a prerequisite for societal critique, which gives an added urgency to her attempts to tame and transform Adèle. However, Adèle's status as a girl-child in a text where girlhood is viewed as reformatory allows her to resist such taming. Instead, her colonial otherness, symbolically inherited from Bertha, mixes with Jane's childhood defiance to create a figure who straddles the seams connecting the practice of imperialism with the Victorian family, allowing her to expose the cracks and ideological paradoxes inherent in the practice of empire.

ALL IN THE FAMILY: ADÈLE AND THE LONG REACH OF IMPERIALISM

The ways in which Adèle acts as a disrupting force to the novel's ideology of imperialism and colonialism demonstrate the entwining of these concerns with the institutions of marriage and family. If readers are to believe that "what happens in the home is both parallel to and necessary for the construction of empire" (Meyer 7), then her function is to question the imperialistic rhetoric that informs the social roles of fathers, daughters, and wives, and to do so in a way that subtlety but profoundly destabilizes the text. One of the first instances of this destabilization comes during her and Jane's evening meetings with Rochester after his return to Thornfield. These meetings become the theater for Rochester to express some of his most nationalistic and dehumanizing opinions about his ward. Before the

first of these encounters, Adèle is distracted and delighted by the thought of "the presents he had brought her" (Brontë 109). When she does ask him about her "cadeaux," Rochester's manner is playful but rather discouraging (111). He calls Adèle "unsophisticated" and uses this judgement to segue into an examination of Jane, remarking that Adèle "is not bright" and "has no talents," yet Jane has "taken great pains with her" (111). Rochester casually uses Adèle as a tool to probe the history and worth of her intriguing young governess, and she at first seems to comply with his judgment of her as a shallow materialist. Jane notes that the girl "could not apply" to her lessons that day because of her speculations about the nature of her gifts (108). Adèle is also canny enough to attempt to cloak her curiosity under the guise of benevolence, asking Rochester if he has brought a present for Jane rather than asking for gifts for herself. Adèle seems to confirm the stereotypes Rochester invokes when he dubs her a "genuine daughter of Paris," as she immediately "retire[s] to a sofa" where she spends the bulk of the scene "absorbed in ecstatic contemplation" of her gifts (118–19). This causes Rochester to proclaim that "coquetry runs in her blood, blends with her brains, and seasons the marrow of her bones" (127). When analyzing this scene, critics have observed that Rochester's gift of an elaborate dance costume allows him to "construc[t] Adèle as the fallen child in order to masochistically remind himself of his promiscuous past" (Valint 217) and that he "associates her with the manipulative sexuality of his wife and his former mistress" (Reisman 135). What has received less attention is the way in which Adèle's behavior and background resists this interpretation and draws attention to her guardian's imperialist bias.

As has been discussed earlier, Adèle is keenly aware of Rochester's disinterest in her, but continues to try to please him nonetheless. With this knowledge in mind, her hunger for gifts and exhaustive examination of them reveals her attempts to relate to her guardian rather than an inherently greedy or perverse nature. She is aware, in some capacity, of the relationship between Rochester and her mother, and has some idea of the performances that first drew him to Céline as she has been trained in this manner of enticement herself: "A great many gentlemen and ladies came to see mamma, and I used to dance before them" (94). Using this knowledge of Rochester and his preferences, she attempts to endear herself to him by studying his gifts and mimicking her mother to the best of her abilities. After putting on the dress, she performs a dance for Jane and Rochester, ending by saying, in French "Thank you so very much, sir, for your kindness … Mama used to do it just like that, didn't she?" (128). Although this performance earns a sarcastic rejoinder from Rochester, it exposes how desperate Adèle is to please him. It also transforms her from the selfish, sexualized outsider of Rochester's nationalistic fantasies to a resourceful and vulnerable survivor.

Such a reading contradicts the novel's representation of the French "national character" as comprised of "sexual immorality and economic greed" (Reisman 134). In the process, Adèle exposes the hollowness of Rochester's xenophobic fears, his appropriation of other cultures, and his victimization of her in order to bear the burden of his own transgressions.

This critique of Rochester's imperial worldview expands to draw in his colonial associations during his house party. The cursoriness of Adèle's appearances during these chapters masks her importance as she again acts as the catalyst for a wider critique of empire building and its effect on the family unit. As the guests wait for Rochester to return from a business trip, Adèle keeps watch by the window and finally announces that her guardian has arrived (171). However, in a mistake rich with irony, she confuses her guardian with Richard Mason, an inhabitant of the West Indies who will later be revealed as the brother of the imprisoned Bertha. His arrival marks the intrusion of the colonial territories into the stolidly English Thornfield. Jane immediately takes note of his "somewhat unusual" accent and "singularly sallow" skin tone (172). Mason also presages one of Bertha's outbreaks from her attic prison, escapes that critics have linked to slave uprisings in the British colonies (Meyer 69). This figurative strategy that Mason brings with him into Thornfield reveals that Adèle's slip may be more perceptive than it at first appears. While Rochester's virile manliness directly contradicts Mason's weak, tropical constitution, both hold the similar goal of controlling and subduing Bertha, the colonial figure they are bound to by ties of marriage and birth. Rochester is very clear that his motive for hiding Bertha sprung from his desire to see "her connection with [him], be buried in oblivion" (Brontë 277). He desires to exorcise Bertha's presence from his life and with it her legacy of madness, slavery, and transgressive sexuality that is inextricably linked to England's colonial mission and its corrupting influence. Mason, on the other hand, wishes to erase Bertha's history by keeping her within the confines of a proper English family. His appearance on Jane and Rochester's wedding day to announce Bertha and Rochester's marriage (260) serves to confirm her position as Rochester's lawful wife, making her position as a colonized subject irrelevant. Since she has been incorporated into the English family, she can never be removed and her madness must be both concealed and disavowed instead of openly acknowledged. The fact that Adèle initiates a comparison of these two imperial, patriarchal men is crucial as it emphasizes her position at the nexus of imperialism and condemnatory girlhood, an association that becomes more prominent as Jane and Rochester's wedding day approaches.

Adèle's greatest act of destabilization is one which she takes the most active part in. The day following their engagement, Rochester decides to take Jane into town to buy a new wardrobe. At her urging, he agrees to

bring Adèle with them as well despite the fact that "she will be a restraint" (238). Adèle does indeed restrain Rochester's fantasies of matrimony, needling him as to the practicality of the tales he tells her and, in the process, exposing the imperialistic misogyny that underlies not only his stories but also his very real expectations surrounding his marriage to Jane. Upon telling Adèle that he and Jane will go to live on the moon, he is surprised by the practical considerations his ward articulates: "She will have nothing to eat: you will starve her," the girl baldly replies (239). Adèle follows this pronouncement with a barrage of questions, asking what Jane will wear, how she will keep warm, and how they will travel to the moon. Rochester's answers do not prove satisfactory as she determines that Jane "is far better as she is … besides, she would get tired of living with only you" (239). The story Rochester tells is essentially a colonial fairy tale with its journeys to and subdual of an unfamiliar landscape. By contradicting it, Adèle undermines a larger imperialist rhetoric, showing how Rochester's assumptions of a pliable, willing lunar landscape are just as laughable as his assumptions that he can capture Jane's body and spirit. Her rejection of his patriarchal colonialism becomes even more explicit when Rochester counters with another thinly-disguised tale in which Jane is a fairy whose "errand was to make [him] happy" and take him out of "the common world to a lonely place" (240). In one of the only instances where Adèle's Frenchness is viewed positively, Jane tells of her "genuine French scepticism" and her appraisal of Rochester as a "real liar" (240). Once again, Adèle's position as a colonial other and female child allows her to expose Rochester's biases and ignorance as well as demonstrating how the practice of empire is rooted in the very structure of the English family. Rochester wishes to colonize Jane, to bend her to his will through marriage, but as a figure who continues to withstand paternal colonization, Adèle is able to see through his charm and subtly warn Jane of his true intentions. By showing that the familial structure that Jane longs for is, in fact, built upon and riddled with the practice of imperialism, Adèle profoundly disrupts the novel's reliance on Englishness and the family as civilizing and redemptive forces.

"QUITE FORGOTTEN LITTLE ADÈLE": TEXTUAL MARGINALIZATION

Given Adèle's penchant for exposing and critiquing the colonial rhetoric inherent to *Jane Eyre*'s ideology, it is not surprising that she is marginalized not only by the novel's characters, but also by the text itself. Rochester's negative opinion of the girl is echoed in the very form and language of the novel, perhaps explaining the critical disregard towards Adèle despite her value to the text. The most famous and misrepresented of these estrang-

ing passages is Jane's own evaluation of Adèle shortly after she comes to Thornfield. In language somewhat reminiscent of Rochester's dismissive comments, she remarks that Adèle is "sometimes wayward" and has "no peculiar development … which raise[s] her one inch above the ordinary level of childhood" (100). This passage is generally read as proof that Jane does not "have any deep feeling for the child" (Duthie 129) despite the fact that Jane qualifies her statements within the next few sentences, admitting that, while her words "will be thought cool language" she still has "a quiet liking" for her pupil (100). Moreover, Jane's later actions clearly demonstrate the love and regard she has for Adèle, casting her earlier statements as a realistic assessment of her pupil's progress rather than as censure. Indeed, these statements perhaps say more about Brontë's negative experiences as a governess than they do about the true state of Jane and Adèle's relationship. Nevertheless, the passage has had a powerful influence over how Adèle has been interpreted (or, more accurately, *not* interpreted) in Brontë scholarship. In this manner, the text itself works against Adèle, obscuring her importance and trivializing her abilities.

A far-reaching instance of textual marginalization is found in the novel's closing chapter. After Jane and Rochester are reunited, Jane speaks to the audience directly asking, "You have not quite forgotten little Adèle, have you, reader?" (400). Ironically, her reproach is followed by further marginalization. Upon arriving at the school where Rochester has placed Adèle, she finds the girl unhappy and moved to "frantic joy" by Jane's visit (400). Jane takes Adèle back with her to Ferndean, hoping to reestablish their former relationship, but "soon found this impracticable; my time and cares were now required by another—my husband needed them all" (400). Despite the fact that Jane's marriage to Rochester has taken place on an equal footing—his blindness and her inheritance having leveled the imperial despotism he once sought to establish over her—the taint of colonialism is still present. After all, the uncle who left her a fortune of twenty-thousand pounds made that fortune in Madeira, a territory as heavily associated with European colonialism as the West Indies. Her new, egalitarian family with Rochester is still deeply implicated in the colonial oppression that Adèle draws attention to, making the girl's reincorporation into the Rochester family unit impossible. Were Adèle to rejoin Jane and Rochester, her peculiar position would simply reveal the continued influence of imperialism on the Victorian family structure and, for the purposes of preserving Jane's triumphant liberation from these societal bonds, she must be excluded. Adèle is instead shuffled off to a "more indulgent" boarding school (400), making way for Jane and Rochester's true child: an infant son who has the "large, brilliant, and black" eyes reminiscent of those his father lost in the fire at Thornfield (402). The fire, started by Bertha, "burns away Rochester's oppressive colo-

nial wealth" (Meyer 92), and the equally oppressive behaviors associated with it. However, the birth of Jane and Rochester's son, bearing the eyes of his father, reinstates colonial wealth and colonial ideology as a suitable basis on which to construct family relationships. Meyer has written at length on how Bertha is "purified from the novel" (92). In a similar manner, Adèle, the first child, must be cleansed in order to make way for the imperialist family structure the novel ends by endorsing. The text does this by means of "a sound English education" that Jane confidently declares "correct[s] in a great measure her French defects" (Brontë 401). By erasing Adèle's nationality, the novel attempts to erase her critique of familial colonialism and rebuild its imperialistic rhetoric on firmer ground.

Adèle represents the meeting points of empire, otherness, and the English family structure, a process that reveals how deeply mainland British families are implicated in the alienating and disenfranchising work of empire. It is no surprise then that the text seeks to underplay and eradicate Adèle's significance. What is notable is the level of success Adèle gains as a disrupting, ideological force. In his discussion of the colonial other, Homi Bhabha demonstrates how the colonial discourse *Jane Eyre* is built on creates a need for a "reformed, recognizable Other" who is familiar to the colonizers while simultaneously remaining separated from them (126). The mimicry that results from this need, however, works to regularly undermine and show the inconsistencies of colonial discourse. Adèle's desperate efforts to please Rochester and the hypocrisy they reveal fall in line with Bhabha's theories, resulting in an intriguing case of textual double vision. While Brontë never allows Adèle the interiority to express her psychological double vision, the novel itself represents this dichotomy through her fractured associations to both the Englishness represented by Jane and the colonialism represented by Bertha. Forced to exist between two cultures, Adèle is educated to become more English while at the same time never being fully assimilated or accepted into English culture. Similarly, she is caught between two mothers: the English Jane and the Creole Bertha, continuing to problematize the text's reliance on imperialism even as it attempts to civilize her. Adèle's otherness, which prevents the text from fully accepting her, also prevents it from truly erasing her, allowing her to continue as a troubling marker of the invasive oppression British colonialism brings into the Victorian home.

Although often ignored in Brontë scholarship, Adèle Varens proves to be a crucial figure in the novel's rhetoric of imperialism, acting as an embodiment of an anxiety regarding imperialism and its result: a racial and national other who questions the status quo. As a citizen of France, she bears the brunt of the novel's xenophobic imaginings concerning Britain's Western rivals, and as a child she is free to both expose and critique these imaginations as part of the novel's theme of reformatory girlhood. These two contradictory

purposes draw her into close association with Jane Eyre and Bertha Mason in a manner that mimics the familial connections of mothers and daughters. British imperialism is thus configured, constructed, and passed on through the mechanism of the family, a synthesis that Adèle unwittingly draws attention to through her liminal position. In the process, she undermines the text's reliance on the family structure by demonstrating its complicity in the undesirable side effects of imperialism: imprisonment, oppression, and despotism. If Adèle herself is any indication, the consequences of these forces threaten to change the nature of the Victorian family irrevocably. Complacent domesticity will crumble, forcing the fathers, mothers, wives, and husbands of Britain to reckon with the outside forces that support their existence and find a home and voice in their children.

CLAUDIA MCCARRON is a recent graduate of Shepherd University, where she was an English major and Modern Languages minor. Her critical and creative writing has been published in *SPARKS, Sans Merci*, and *The Sigma Tau Delta Review*. She has also presented work at regional and national conferences. She hopes to continue studying literature and language in a master's or doctoral program, and to pursue her goal of becoming a children's author.

NOTES

1. The translations cited in this paper are those provided by the 4th Norton Critical edition of *Jane Eyre*, edited by Deborah Lutz.

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Beyond Metaphor, Beyond Fixity:
Physical Disability in Toni Morrison's *Sula*

Dylan Reber, University of West Georgia

Toni Morrison's 1973 novel *Sula* tells of the Bottom, a black neighborhood in Ohio marked by the disrupting presence of a few eclectic residents. These myriad characters are best described as indeterminate. Morrison avoids structuring the text around binary archetypes, and withholds the foregrounded motivations and interior monologues that make literary characters definable. Of *Sula*'s cast, Eva Peace remains an especially unfixed component. When Eva first appears in the text—as grandmother to the novel's titular Sula and one-legged pillar of the Bottom's community—it seems that her motherliness or her disability will define her. But Eva's actions and interactions in the text render her a perplexing, even inscrutable figure, and this resistance to fixity makes her a notable subject for disability studies. Morrison treats Eva's physical impairment—her status as amputee—as one quality of a multifaceted and complex being, as a significant part but never a synecdoche of her identity. She thereby avoids the oversimplification into object that seems to plague many disabled characters in literary history. In rejecting the use of disability as a literary device, Morrison prevents the reduction of Eva's character to her physical condition. This allows for a portrayal of disability not confined to metaphor and symbolism, but one that depicts the disabled body and its experience as indeterminate. *Sula* thus works to forge a representational strategy of disability as a complex, unfixed identity rather than a literary utility.

Morrison departs from any reductive model of disability by refusing to make Eva's status as amputee a metaphor. If a character's disability represents some larger concept, it begs the question whether, as David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder write, "their disability is the foundation of the character

itself" (6). In other words, does the author use disability solely as a device of characterization, or do they treat it as a complex, "socially negotiated identity" (11)? Morrison plays with the potential symbolic meanings of Eva's amputation to resist reducing disability to a literary device. This is not to say that an interpretative reader cannot attach metaphorical significance to her missing limb, but that Morrison writes Eva in such a way that repels clear metaphorical associations. In fact, Eva's disability seems not to be representative of anything, and Morrison instead treats it as a complex issue in and of itself. Her missing leg may at first suggest a lack or loss—perhaps mirroring that of her runaway husband, Boyboy—or some form of symbolic sacrifice through which she gains money and a renewed love of motherhood. But so much mystery surrounds Eva's amputation that these suggestions quickly lose validity. Loss and sacrifice are especially feeble examples, as readers do not know whether the removal of Eva's leg was done *by* her or *to* her, nor for what purposes, if any. Rather than settling the meaning of Eva's amputation early in the novel, Morrison leaves it as ambiguous as the other traits of her character.

Morrison makes evident this ambiguity in passages on pages 30 and 31, wherein both Eva and various townspeople question and expand the mysteries of the amputated leg. Eva tells "fearful" stories about how she lost it to entertain children, giving different tales each time, none of them truthful. Eva's playfulness regarding her disability clashes with it being representative of a strictly negative loss. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson sees Eva's impish attitude as central to her status as a trickster figure. She writes: "The trickster is ambivalence personified" (117). Not only is Eva unclear about the origins of her condition; she is also ambivalent as to its effects on her life, and concerns herself very little with it. The sole complaint Eva gives of her condition in the novel is that it annoys her as she maneuvers down a staircase, but it does not otherwise limit her. When Eva seeks to put out a fire enveloping her daughter Hannah, she has surprisingly little trouble smashing through and throwing herself out of a window to reach the flames. The text thwarts any notion that Eva's condition represents some limitation, and she remains an active subject through the first two-thirds of the text. Morrison offers little certainty about both the disability itself and Eva's feelings towards it, and in doing so eschews the kinds of simplistic associations that would have disability stand in as substitute for some other problem. Readers are thereby forced to engage with Eva's physical condition on its own terms, with the experience of disability rather than its value as literary device.

As further evidence that Eva's disability resists metaphor, one can consider that she seems primarily to gain from having lost her leg. In truth, she exists in a far better position post-amputation than before, a fact which clashes with

the standard view of amputation as loss. When Morrison describes the pre-amputated Eva, a collection of difficult experiences frame her history: "five years of a sad and disgruntled marriage," extreme poverty with three children to feed, and little to suggest that things will get better. She then leaves Medallion and her children, returning eighteen months later "with two crutches, a new black pocketbook, and one leg" (Morrison 34). Eva's crutches are anti-symbolic here: though they signify a lack of physical mobility, her new black pocketbook implies a greatly increased social mobility. The monetary freedom she now possesses offsets her temporary dependence on crutches. Contrary to her prior state of poverty and distress, Eva now has the means to raise her children and the funds to construct a boarding house—all after becoming physically disabled. Morrison unsettles the immediate suggestion of amputation as loss by giving Eva a newfound efficacy.

While Eva's economic transformation serves as evidence for her resisting negative metaphors of loss, it may simultaneously attract obverse, positive metaphors of disability as gain. Garland-Thomson, for example, interprets Eva's disability as "augmenting her power and dignity, inspiring awe and becoming a mark of superiority" (117). She sees Eva as deciding to amputate herself in "an act of self-production" that "frees her from poverty" (116). Garland-Thomson's interpretation here is well founded—as in Eva's case physical disability liberates rather than limits—but her "affirmative reading," as Sheri I. Hoem calls it, pushes Eva's condition too firmly into the realm of literary device (197). By reading the amputation as a symbol for freedom, positive connotations notwithstanding, we risk treating disability as a stand-in for something else, as some issue that is decidedly not the disabled experience. Furthermore, the supposed link between her becoming disabled and returning to the Bottom with newfound wealth is, in truth, a tenuous one, as Morrison offers no real evidence in the text for their being related. The only suggestion that the amputation resulted in monetary gain comes from two unnamed townspeople who gossip about how Eva might have traded her leg for money: "Somebody said Eva stuck it under a train and made them pay off. Another said she sold it to a hospital for $10,000" (Morrison 31). Although this notion supports Garland-Thomson's claim that Eva is self-amputated, we need not buy into such blatant speculation. Every other instance in the text demonstrates that all that can be factually discerned about Eva's disability is that it exists. Readers may interpret the gossip as truthful, but without any corroboration from the narrator, Eva, or other characters, it remains careless hearsay reported indirectly through dialogue. The novel goes on to state that, unlike the gossipers, those living in the Bottom mostly ignore the disability, allowing other aspects of Eva's character—her profession as landlady, her command of respect, and her relationships with her children—to take precedent in the narrative. Mor-

rison's depiction of physical disability is thus not conducive to metaphors of loss *or* gain, drawing neither pity nor excess inspiration and leaving Eva a singularly unfixed character. By resisting the fixity of metaphors of both pity and inspiration, Morrison continues in Eva her refusal to "valorize any one term of an opposition at the cost of devaluing its opposed other" (Dubey 84). The character and her disabled body do not fit any restrictive mold, nor do they fit into opposing categories of metaphor.

Eva may not be immune to metaphorical interpretations, but Morrison continually resists them by playing with the potential meanings of her missing leg. The upshot of all this is a character both internally and externally complex, rather than merely the former. Claude Pruitt writes of Eva: "Her every personal attitude is mated with its own inversion as Morrison creates in Eva possibly the single most internally conflicted character in postmodern fiction" (120). Morrison's unfixed characterization of Eva's disability renders her exterior state as complex as her interior. Morrison neither hides Eva's disability in the text nor objectifies it to the point of fetishization. There is a distinct lack of textual evidence for how and why the amputation occurred, as well as little mention of its effects on Eva's life. It is explored but left ambiguous; it is part of but far from all Eva is. The only characters who do reduce her to her disability are unnamed rumormongers, while the text itself is anything but reductive. Morrison's portrayal of disability is thus non-essentializing—by avoiding strict metaphor and choosing not to use disability as a literary device, it is instead accepted on its own terms, as one attribute of a complex being. In this way, Morrison sidesteps potentially diminutive claims about those with physical disabilities being like something, and Eva's identity is not reduced to her being an amputee. The literary canon may suggest that the disabled body always serves as a literary device, one ripe for metaphorical analysis; *Sula* provides an alternative model, one of disability as resisting rather than confirming or creating boundaries. When disabled characters are written obliquely, with the full range of human depth, they can be read as representative of a complex social identity—not as stand-ins for literary ends but as engaging and unconventional portrayals of an often ignored disabled experience.

DYLAN REBER is a senior English major and Film Studies minor attending the University of West Georgia. He wrote this essay for a research and methodology class, and it is his first disability studies paper. He enjoys epic poetry, Platonic dialogues, and his favorite novel is *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky. After earning his bachelor's, Dylan hopes to pursue a graduate degree in rhetoric and composition.

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Cultural Study of AIDS in the 1980s

Julia Shankus, University of West Georgia

In the 1980s, a new disease swept through the male gay community, leaving very few survivors. Because of its association with the gay community, Auto Immune Deficiency Syndrome was met with disdain and controversy by the straight media. The initial emergence of AIDS exacerbated the hateful public view of the gay community and further spread the idea that homosexuality is dirty and wrong. However, one should take notice of the fact that despite the split between the straight public and the gay public, as well as the fracture and isolation of the gay community and government, AIDS helped to usher in a sense of community and push for the reform of safe sex education. Through the examination of scientific and cultural sources, one will learn about the way the emergence of AIDS was received among the public and how it helped to shape a new culture. The 1980s AIDS outbreak led to a massive fracture between the gay community and the rest of society; the disease brings to light the political media attention, or lack thereof, that many of the sufferers received, highlights the bias held in scientific discourse regarding the disease, as well as ushers in AIDS activism and safe sex reform.

The emergence of AIDS in the 1980s led to an entirely new form of activism: AIDS activism, which is entirely separate from, yet born of gay activism. The AIDS activism movement arose in the early 1980s when "gay men living with a disease of unknown etiology and sobering mortality faced not only a threat to their health, and the stigma that soon accompanied it, but a phenomenon sociologists … have described as 'social death'" (Wright). Dr. Wright addresses the controversial nature of the disease and details why the afflicted felt the need to fight for the right to be treated as human beings as opposed to less than human. He also discusses the difference between

social death and stigma, arguing that "only people with AIDS faced the problem of social death, and that challenge caused gay men with AIDS to see their agenda as distinct from that of gay men around them" (Wright). In a narrow sense of the word, Wright explains that "stigma" comes from the idea that a certain characteristic "spoils a person," whereas "social death means that a person is viewed as 'not quite alive'" (Wright). One certainly takes notice of the immense bias that Wright writes about here: gay men already faced a stigma because of their sexuality, and gay men with AIDS faced the stigma of being gay and of having "gay cancer;" thus they must also deal with their impending social deaths. AIDS activism was born of the unique prejudice that AIDS sufferers face, and its purpose is to fight for fair treatment and spread awareness of the disease that was getting so little media attention at the time.

Though Wright may be correct in assuming that social death is a phenomenon that was at one time unique to AIDS sufferers, he defines it as a sense of pity one feels when someone is dying. Of course, gay men with AIDS dealt with a different kind of social death—one that was exacerbated by the stigma of homosexuality—but social death alone can attach itself to anyone who gains attention for his or her illness. A sick person is no longer a person, but rather, in the public's eyes, embodies the disease. However, in terms of AIDS, the idea of social death becomes intertwined with stigma because "if living people are so despised as to be wished to be dead, then the prediction of their death is … met with … anticipatory relief" (Wright). By this statement, Wright means to draw attention to the extreme hatred of the gay community—so extreme in fact that others would be relieved upon announcement of their deaths. Homosexuality, largely perceived as a blight upon the rest of society, bred hatred toward the community and further isolated gay men with AIDS from not only the rest of "normalized" society but also from gay men without AIDS. Because of this isolation, further aggravated by social death and stigma, AIDS activism became an important way for people to fight marginalization and gain media attention.

There are innumerable sources that discuss the AIDS outbreak, all of which take a stance on the disease in one way or another. Scientific discourse, though claiming to be unbiased, found its way into everyday society, pushing its subtly homophobic language on the public. Scientific studies and other cultural pieces leaked into the culture of the 1980s. Lawrence K. Altman, a doctor and a reporter for *The New York Times*, is credited with writing the first major news article published about the disease. He details how the emergence of Kaposi's Sarcoma alerted medical professionals to the spread of AIDS. At the time of this publication, AIDS had not yet been identified, let alone named. Altman details how the disease started becoming noticeable in 1981 when doctors began treating more cases of Kaposi's

Sarcoma, a rare cancer that usually takes about ten years to run its course. Medical professionals were baffled because, in the United States, "less than six-one-hundredths of a case per 100,000 people annually" are diagnosed with the cancer (Altman). To clarify, that means that about two people out of three million are diagnosed with Kaposi's Sarcoma in the United States. In a report published in the journal, *Epidemiology and Infection*, researchers Armstrong, Lam, and Chase "examine trends in incidence, geographical distribution, and survival of classic and AIDS-related Kaposi's Sarcoma" in order to make sense of the disease and the health issues it causes. They found that "although KS was rare in the USA prior to the 1980s, the onset of the AIDS epidemic … brought a surge in the incidence of AIDS-related KS" (Armstrong et al.). Altman examines this surge in his news article, "Rare Cancer Seen in 41 Homosexuals," but he explains the severity of the situation in layman's terms so that the average reader is able to comprehend. Altman reports that the doctors studying the rise of KS in the United States "said that most cases had involved homosexual men who have had multiple and frequent sexual encounters with different partners, as many as ten sexual encounters each night up to four times a week" (Altman). Further, Altman explains that many of the infected men had also received treatment for "viral infections such as herpes, cytomegalovirus, and hepatitis B … [and] had used drugs such as amyl nitrite and LSD to heighten sexual pleasure" (Altman).

Altman's article, though easy to understand and informative in terms of factual evidence presented, certainly did not aid the gay community in its fight for humane representation. Although Altman merely relayed information he gathered from other medical professionals, one must note the way that AIDS sufferers are represented: as a generalized group of people, in which all members have multiple sexual partners. Many of the AIDS sufferers also received treatment for other diseases, which furthered the generalizations of the gay community and the disease. In a time when being gay was still mostly generalized by stereotypes of promiscuity, an article written by a doctor and riddled with quotes from other medical professionals about the disease infecting mostly men who use drugs and have frequent sexual encounters every night does nothing but solidify the public's opinion that homosexuality alone causes diseases. Again, the issue of bias even among scientific communities arises because, when approached with questions about the disease, Dr. Friedman-Kien, the doctor with whom Altman spoke, only reports on the infected who perpetuate promiscuity. By looking at Altman's article, readers notice how scientific discourse was instrumental in the isolation of gay community.

Another example of bias in the scientific community is in a report published by the *American Journal of Public Health,* which indicates the

stigma and social death that Wright details. The bias exists even in purely scientific articles in the same way certain publications refer to and study gay men. In the lab report published by the *American Journal of Public Health* in 2001, the authors' study focuses solely on gay men in urban areas with AIDS. As they detail their procedures, readers will notice that their intention was only to test men who have sex with men (MSM). Even though it is mentioned that "investigators [have not] obtained unbiased estimates of HIV prevalence among MSM since the 1980s," this study seems highly biased towards the idea that AIDS is a gay disease because they only study gay men (Catania, et al.). At one point in time, AIDS was largely considered a gay disease because of its prevalence in that specific community, but this report was conducted and published after AIDS began to spread to other straight men, women, and children through infected donor blood. The CDC first announced possible issues with donor blood and urged that the blood be tested in 1983—this testing does not occur until 1985. By the time this study was published in 2001, thousands of people, regardless of age, gender, and sexuality were diagnosed with AIDS. However, the scientists who conducted this research still seem to associate AIDS with homosexuality because they only express interest in, as the title would suggest, "The Continuing HIV Epidemic Among Men who have Sex with Men." To only further research on the disease in gay men even after it started to spread widely among other groups of people suggests the deep prejudice against the gay community—even in lab reports. Reports such as this do not aid in dropping the stigma against the gay community, but rather they exacerbate the issue and call for the continued need for AIDS activism. With this in mind, one must consider then that much of the scientific research that went into the study of AIDS is biased. The reports carry a negative tone and it is therefore important to consider the possibility that much of the research devoted to the study of AIDS is tainted with prejudice. Thus, both gay and specifically AIDS activism is a continued necessity in order to combat stigma and social death perpetuated by prejudice not only in the media but also in the scientific and medical communities.

This fracturing of straight society and gay society has been written about and capitalized upon many times. For instance, Roger Spottiswood's cinematic rendition of Randy Shilts' novel *And the Band Played On* explores deeply the initial AIDS outbreak and the implications that it carried when it was primarily associated with the gay community. One of the most memorable lines comes from openly gay politician Bill Krause who says, "the only people reading about gay men dying are gay men and the ones who wish they'd all die" (Spottiswood 17:11). This poignant line speaks to the willful ignorance of society regarding the gay community and AIDS,

as well as suggests the deep disdain felt for homosexuality at the time. The film portrays beautifully, albeit painfully, the idea of social death and stigma tightly intertwined. *And the Band Played On* explores AIDS on a multitude of layers, particularly focusing on bias held in all facets of society: governmental, scientific, and social, and how members of the community struggled against prejudice and fought for their right to be treated with respect and decency as human beings.

In Spottiswood's film, Bobbi Campbell, a male nurse who was diagnosed with Kaposi's Sarcoma, declares himself the "self-appointed KS poster boy" by posting flyers up around San Francisco (Spottiswood 22:09). The real Bobbi Campbell "put pictures of his KS lesions in the window of a Castro District pharmacy, urging men with similar lesions to seek medical attention" (Wright). According to Wright, when Campbell moved to San Francisco, he "immersed himself in the political and social life of the community … he … enrolled in the nurse practitioner training program … intending to focus on health care for the lesbian and gay community" (Wright). After he was diagnosed with Kaposi's Sarcoma, he wrote articles for a local gay newspaper "about his experience of what was then often called 'gay cancer'" (Wright). He became a voice for AIDS activism, saying in the film, "if the gay community doesn't start raising hell, you think Reagan's gonna do a damn thing?" (Spottiswood 22:14). Here, Campbell relays the importance of unity in the gay community. This line is suggestive of a government that simply turned a blind eye to AIDS sufferers; Campbell spoke out for the betterment of himself and those afflicted because he knew that the gay community would remain ignored unless they actively fought for themselves. The film, though dramatized in some respects for cinematic effect, portrays Bobbi Campbell as exactly what he was, a proud activist. Though Campbell's diagnosis was of cancer, and not of AIDS, he "immediately saw social and political implications of his condition" (Wright). In this statement, Campbell uses the word condition to imply both his sexuality and his cancer: "gayness, like a cancer diagnosis, is socially stigmatized" (Wright). Bobbi Campbell, despite not having AIDS, represents an important voice for the AIDS activism movement because, as Wright indicates, he experienced many of the same prejudices. His Kaposi's Sarcoma diagnosis was right on the heels of the uptick in AIDS-related KS cases, and as an outspoken gay man, he understood the concept of social death intertwined with stigma. Because AIDS-related Kaposi's Sarcoma spiked in the United States, Campbell was likely lumped in with AIDS sufferers; KS was also often referred to as gay cancer. Campbell's work with AIDS activism is not lessened because he did not have AIDS, but rather he remains an important member of the movement because of his close relation to the issue.

The new disease "was so mysterious and yet such an omnipresent focus of dread that many people simply referred to the disease as 'it'" (Wright). By calling the disease "it," those who were diagnosed were stigmatized, an issue that Campbell's support group addressed, saying, "we understand … that by making us different, you protect yourself from 'it.' However, despite our understanding of your need to see yourselves as different, we need to tell you that we are not" (Wright). Campbell's push to mend not only the fracture within the gay community, but also to help unify all of society in support of AIDS activism is shown partly through the work he did in his support groups, pushing for an understanding from different communities. Bobbi Campbell is represented in Spottiswood's film just as Dr. Wright describes him in his article—as a man who fought for the rights and fair treatment of gay men and gay men with AIDS.

The initial AIDS outbreak was a mystery to doctors and scientists everywhere, but even before they learned that it was sexually transmitted, they knew that it was of the highest volume in the male gay community. That association alone made AIDS and anyone who had it a threat to public health, yet it was not until AIDS started affecting straight people that major media outlets began reporting the disease with the urgency it deserved in the first place. *And the Band Played On* makes mention of the "gay press" and the "straight press" more than once, and often, the straight press is accused of ignoring the suffering in the gay community—"so far not one T.V. station has even mentioned it. Not one word in the straight press" (Spottiswood 16:49). Upon examination, one will find that particular statement to ring true, at least until AIDS started to affect straight people.

When fourteen-year-old Ryan White was diagnosed with AIDS after receiving a blood transfusion with infected blood, his story made national headlines. He, like gay men with the disease, was ostracized and he was forced out of public school when the other students' parents threatened to pull their children out of school if Ryan continued to attend. However, the major difference between Ryan's treatment and that of the infected gay community is that Ryan's case drew attention from major media outlets like *The New York Times*. In 1990, when Ryan tragically passed away from his disease, *The New York Times* covered the story of his illness: all his pitfalls and triumphs, and his death. The article is titled, "Ryan White Dies of AIDS at 18; His Struggle Helped Pierce Myths." The title of the article alone suggests the idea that the myths about AIDS as a dirty disease were only beginning to be disproven when a young boy was diagnosed with it. Johnson writes that "Ryan's struggle to be accepted in a public school forced Central Indiana to grapple with difficult issues raised by the disease" (Johnson). When a young boy is diagnosed with AIDS and treated the same way gay men with the disease were treated, people had to come to terms with

their own biases about AIDS and homosexuality. What Johnson seems to insinuate with his statement is that people in Ryan's town were suddenly forced to look within themselves and confront their own homophobia and stereotypes about AIDS and the gay community.

Though the death of anyone by AIDS is tragic enough, worse still is that it took the struggle of a young boy to convey to the public the severity of the disease and to help start a conversation about AIDS and how it is not a punishment for homosexuality. The need for AIDS activism "by and for people living with HIV/AIDS … started from a related tension in response to AIDS:" in other words, those with AIDS, primarily gay men, needed to be vocal in order to address their disease and the myths associated with it. (Wright). When AIDS was limited to those in the gay community, people like Bobbi Campbell recognized the need to speak out about the disease and mistreatment of its sufferers. However, when Ryan White was diagnosed, his story received national media attention. White's case, which resulted in having him labelled a pariah when he received his initial diagnosis, ultimately helped to debunk many of the myths so many people before him fought so hard to disprove. In the case of Ryan White, one really comes to understand the level of ignorance and lack of care the gay community received when AIDS initially emerged—Ryan's story was met with media attention because he was only a child and therefore "innocent" when he was diagnosed. The stories of gay men with the disease did not receive the same amount of media coverage, at least not to the same level and effect. The case of Ryan White and the media only further suggests the need for AIDS activism.

One positive result of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s is safe sex reform. Dr. Thomas Blair acknowledges that "HIV/AIDS created a tipping point for safe sex" (Blair). He writes that sex education prior to the 1980s in the United States "emphasized protecting females from premarital conception and males from venereal disease … for gay men … safe sex was inconsistently defined" (Blair). In fact, Blair mentions that an "article on anonymous gay sexual encounters … defined safe sex as an encounter without violence … This was life before AIDS" (Blair). The idea that safe sex for gay men was defined based on whether or not there was violence involved suggests a deeply prejudiced discourse. The use of the term violence, in fact, carries the connotation of sexual assault. Although the emergence of AIDS was accompanied with bias and ignorance of an insurmountable level, it also ushered in a new wave of safe sex education for members of the gay community, helping to change the way safe sex was discussed and written about. People were starting to address safe sex in the gay community publicly and as a way to prevent venereal diseases, rather than violence: "in 1985, the San Francisco AIDS Foundation … announced at the city's annual Gay Pride

March that 'there is no longer any excuse for unsafe sex'" (Blair). Though AIDS is a degenerative disease that struck fear and caused a panic among both the gay and, eventually, straight communities, it also brought forth a sense of unity for the healthy gay community and the afflicted alike. While Dr. Wright's earlier claim about AIDS activism separating sick gay men and others with AIDS from the rest of the gay community holds true in many scenarios, there is certainly a sense that the two are still connected in the fight against and prevention of the disease and the push for safer sex education in the gay community.

In the 1980s, AIDS brought about a whole new era of AIDS activism and safer sex practices. It also arrived with a built-in bias. In the beginning, the disease ravaged the male gay community, and the straight media either refused to address it, or addressed it with disdain. The disease emerged in the United States in 1981, and President Reagan did not give his first major speech about AIDS until 1987. In fact, Reagan's administration is the backbone of heteronormative society, which seems to suggest an almost hierarchical "passing down" of values to the rest of the citizens. The government's unwillingness to discuss the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s yielded an unwillingness from others. Not only is there immense prejudice against the gay community in politics and in the media, but also in the way certain scientific publications conduct and publish supposedly unbiased studies on the disease. Major publications like *The American Journal of Public Health* published scientific reports with subtly prejudiced language—reports that made their way into the public and became a part of the 1980s anti-AIDS, anti-gay culture. Throughout the course of the initial AIDS outbreak, the gay community was shunned from the rest of society, and the gay lifestyle, already disapproved of, was even further and more actively hated upon. Through the isolation that AIDS sufferers felt came the rise of AIDS activism, as well as a conversation about safe sex reform, but not before the loss of so many lives.

JULIA SHANKUS graduated summa cum laude with her bachelor's degree in English in May of 2019 from the University of West Georgia. She originally wrote this paper for Dr. Laura Miller and Dr. Janet Genz's class, Translating Science. She has too many books that she liked to name them all, but some of her favorite classes were Gothic Literature, Post-American Literature, Film as Literature, and her Senior Seminar: Humans and Animals. Now that she has graduated, she is headed to Mercer Law School for her Juris Doctorate.

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Can the Subaltern Sing?: How Olive Senior Uses Elements of Grief and Song as a Form of Speech in Her Short Story "Lily, Lily"

Amber Stickney, Georgia Southern University

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak infamously stated that the subaltern could not speak but she later remanded her scholarship to declare that the possibility for the subaltern to speak remained (Spivak 32). The ambiguity of the definition of the subaltern, which is traditionally defined using Spivak's scholarship as a person who is oppressed in their society due to their social, political, or geographical status, allows writers such as Olive Senior to widely explore different milieus to encapsulate the many voices that are left unheard. Although Hawkim Williams iterates that "the contemporaneously bifurcated educational system that was created during the colonial era may serve to reinforce … the discursive violence that [causes] the Caribbean region, per capita, to be one of the most violent in the world" (39), historical oppression, violence, and erasure does not silence the perseverance of subaltern women. Senior's collection of short stories and poetry *Arrival of the Snake-Woman* illuminates the local narratives of subaltern women that are often overshadowed by the grand narrative of the hegemony. Specifically, in the short story "Lily, Lily," Senior's proliferation of narrators, unconventional use of syntax, and her storytelling, which includes the amalgamation of both protagonists, Auntie Lily and little Lily, and their joined song proves that not only can the subaltern speak through manifestations of grief, but that they can also sing.

The purposeful confusion between the two identical names of the protagonists allows Senior to disrupt the stigma surrounding the fallen woman that many subaltern women face. Although little Lily is unaware of her

biological mother, Auntie Lily, there is foreshadowing of the twinning that will take place between them. Throughout the story, both protagonists rise above the inevitable oppression that Caribbean women face: sexual abuse, racism, colorism, sexism, and the lack of all forms of education, including sex education, which all lead to little self-worth. Initially, Auntie Lily finds refuge in her traditional lighter-skinned sexual beauty, which creates even more hardship practically (the birth of little Lily) and internally, but learns through her daughter that their self-worth is located within and cannot be tamed. When the first narrator, the "only one white person left," Emmeline Greenfield rambles on about the DaSilva's white ancestors, she compares them to the "McGregor twins," the "identical" Lawrence family, and their "eleven" children (129). The comparison to common twin features and the repetition of the number one in eleven, whether it be the number of Lawrence children or Lily's age are non-coincidental allusions to the future inability to differentiate between little Lily and Auntie Lily. As little Lily matures, she begins to "look more like Auntie Lily, wants more and more to be with Auntie Lily, become Auntie Lily" (133). Although little Lily is not fully mature, according to Mrs. DaSilva she has "become a woman early," (148) like the girls of her family and the many children of the Caribbean who are forced to grow up quickly due to the "struggle for socialization and self-construction that demand that they come to terms with a symbolic in which both parents are absent" (Beittel and Covi 392). Auntie Lily's dedication to the fairytale life with Mr. Pym proves to be an unattainable symbol that leads to another broken promise of belonging, which mirrors the betrayal little Lily endures under the "ugly and thickly covered with matted hair hands" of Mr. DaSilva that the reader eventually learns happened to Auntie Lily as well (133). This imbued feeling of isolation, and in turn grief, translates into a "perfect match, perfect blend" of "pure soprano" between both Auntie Lily and little Lily (126, 158, 134).

The inextricable relationship between mother and daughter permeates throughout the language of other characters as well. While it may seem like Senior blatantly disregards syntax, she inserts and withholds punctuation, such as commas and pronouns to offer an alternative to the damning reputation of Auntie Lily that attempts to pervade. For example, when Emmeline discusses little Lily's "smudge, an uncertainty," she claims, "We hasten to say it has nothing to do with anything that Lily has done for Lily is pure as her name" (127). At first glance, it seems as if Emmeline is solely deflecting blame away from Auntie Lily because there is no expected comma before the conjunction, "for;" therefore it reads as: "We hasten to say it has nothing to do with anything that Lily has done for Lily" rather than "We hasten to say it has nothing to do with anything that Lily has done, for Lily" (127). It is later revealed that Mrs. DaSilva blames Auntie

Lily for little Lily's change in demeanor, for Auntie Lily is a fallen woman who at first "docilely agrees to everything then having the baby and refuses to look at her," but then later plants evil within her (146, 148). However, Auntie Lily airs the truth in the final letter to Mrs. DaSilva that exposes Mr. DaSilva as a child molester who has transformed little Lily into "a ghost of her former self" and Mrs. DaSilva as a woman who "ignores the grief and pain of a little girl" (148, 153). Auntie Lily also responds to Mrs. DaSilva's accusation of being cold-spirited in an agonizing admission of the hardship "to leave her behind, take the train and come back to the room in Aunt Mercy's house, the station at the post office as if nothing happened" (147, 156). After Auntie Lily's difficult decision to leave little Lily behind, she first uses her grief as a form of speech by not speaking at all. Auntie Lily refrains from singing until she meets again with her daughter regularly, where she regains the confidence to sing for and with her daughter by singing for herself rather than for others.

By repeating the name Lily instead of replacing it with the expected pronoun she, Emmeline deflects blame away from both Lily characters before Auntie Lily's letter even surfaces. Throughout Emmeline's narration sequences, she directly speaks to both Auntie Lily and little Lily. Emmeline's statement: "But Lily, Lily is fine" addresses Auntie Lily's and little Lily's concerns about each other's well-being (130). Emmeline's narration presents a diversion that dismantles Mrs. DaSilva's accusation of Auntie Lily's indifference towards her daughter, little Lily. As the first narrator of the story, who uses the royal "we" and charitably "hand[s] over the role as queen bee … as the arbiter of taste and values," Emmeline dismisses the disgrace of a fallen woman through her self-declared status as an authority figure (124). However, Alison Donnel explains in her article "The Short Fiction of Olive Senior" that Senior's ability to "write from the inside out" allows subaltern women to own their supposed dishonor and for some, create new definitions of honor through the proliferation of voices that are heard through multiple narrators (118). While Emmeline frames the story with her privilege as a "born intellectual … encouraged to cultivate her mind by her Pater … and become a teeny bit radical and somewhat agnostic … and leave aside marrying," Auntie Lily initially limits herself to strive for what Mrs. DaSilva has: "the husband, the house, the position as they were all a young woman of her background should aim for" (125, 153). Auntie Lily and Mrs. DaSilva serve as a contrast to Emmeline due to their respective backgrounds. They are lighter-skinned Caribbean women who do not inhabit Emmeline's whiteness nor the nativity of the unnamed lower-class barefoot woman. Auntie Lily and Mrs. DaSilva were taught that the only way to somewhat achieve Emmeline's privilege is to marry. This is why Auntie Lily entered a sexual relationship with the businessman, Mr. Pym,

who mirrors the very businessman who sexually abused her throughout her childhood, Mr. DaSilva. Mrs. DaSilva's "acts of strategic submission" (Donnell 126) to Mr. DaSilva's sordid conduct are accurately explained by Mark Beittel and Giovanna Covi, who note "that many women are reluctant to marry men who do not have the financial means to support them" (393) because marriage can open doors for social advancement, which Mrs. DaSilva ironically achieves as she is "in charge of the domestic manners and morals of our little town here" despite her knowledge of Mr. DaSilva's sexually predatory ways (Senior 124).

However, the "double standard" that Senior identifies in an interview with Wolfgang Binder ultimately leads to more women becoming further oppressed rather than empowered. Auntie Lily refuses to let herself or her daughter suffer anymore and therefore finds her voice to both speak and sing. In her letter to Mrs. DaSilva, Auntie Lily reiterates Senior's disdain for society's "contempt for the single, childless women" as Auntie Lily was never "taught the facts of life" and could not understand "why it was not only pardonable but expected in women of the so-called lower classes" (155). To avoid the status as a fallen woman, Mrs. DaSilva endures a botched abortion that renders her unable to bear children. This childlessness reinforces the "widespread practice of 'child-shifting' (a childless woman who wishes to mother a child 'borrows' one from someone else)" (Beittel and Covi 390). It does not matter whether a woman with middle-class aspirations aborts or keeps her child, for the end-result remains the same. The feelings of misplacement, isolation, and shame is cyclical as Caribbean women cannot circumvent the system that they are intertwined in.

Despite the hopelessness that this system instills within Caribbean women, Auntie Lily refuses to fall but instead fly like little Lily. At first neither Auntie Lily nor little Lily realizes that they have the capability to fly, as Auntie Lily yearns for Mr. Pym's ability to "fly out of reach of responsibility, fly from trouble, fly to a new life elsewhere" and Little Lily wishes to "take off flying and never back fly into the winds, the clouds, fly to Auntie Lily" (139, 143). However, when their interactions become more frequent, they each begin to influence the other and "fly towards each other like magnets" (147). Little Lily's aspirations to attend St. Catherine's is an opportunity that Auntie Lily never dreamed of for herself. Auntie Lily refuses to let little Lily's dreams be only dreams as the former threatens "to be present in spirit to watch over Lily" (156). This brazen confidence within Auntie Lily manifests in her newfound ability to hover or fly like a spirit. Her daughter's ambition ignites Auntie Lily's desire to leave for Colón, where she previously believed only men like Mr. Pym and Mr. DaSilva could fly to. Although Auntie Lily is forced to become an "independent woman," her daily life inspires little Lily to fly too, to Auntie Lily's and towards her

goals. Auntie Lily's ownership of the communication of the town, as well as her own voice, arouses a sense of empowerment within little Lily. Through her job at the post office, Auntie Lily becomes "the centre of the universe" (133). People "consult [her] every day," for she has the power to communicate information, but her power to communicate also includes the ability to revoke information, which she has performed in the past when she "cut the village off from the rest of the universe" by withholding both her singing and the mail (133–34, 138). Even though Auntie Lily withholds her communicative abilities, including her singing, she still "sings only for herself, totally unconscious of the commotion her singing causes," (134). This defiant act juxtaposes "Mrs. Montrose's great plans," or claiming of little "Lily and her voice" (126). This symbiotic relationship between Auntie Lily and little Lily allows Auntie Lily to be the "centre" of the universe and little Lily to be the "inheritor" of Auntie Lily's universe (154).

Auntie Lily's and little Lily's combined song first acts as a dirge for the abuses that are felt by all subaltern women but later as an uplifting hymn for the renewed hope that prevails. Previously shrouded in secrecy, the grief surrounding abandonment, child loss, sexual assault, and shame remains suppressed, despite the multiple narrators who illustrate that all women endure these hardships. Auntie Lily's initial withdrawal of song mirrors the Caribbean women, including herself, who must restrain their grief. However, when little Lily rebels against the expectation to withstand her suffering in silence, Auntie Lily's speech and song regenerate. Their name, Lily topically represents how "white and perfect" they both are, but more importantly, it symbolizes the restoration of lost innocence that the Lily flower signifies at funerals (146). Both Lily characters realize their potential to start again, which mirrors the connotation of the Lily flower itself. Hans-Georg Erney's analysis of Senior's short story "Ballad" also rings true for "Lily, Lily" as both stories are "more than solipsistic moping—[they] can be read as a tribute to the resilience of Caribbean women" (133). In a letter to Aunt Dawn, Aunt Mercedes quips that once Aunt Lily "has made up her mind, *there is no moving her*," which Aunt Lily fulfills as she outwardly acknowledges her quality as "the flower of our island" and refuses to think anything otherwise (154). Auntie Lily and little Lily, the "centre" and "inheritor" of the universe, connect further to the environment as nature now embodies their previous silence: "Leaves hold themselves in readiness as for rain and the birds are shushing one another. Trees start to move in closer, though surreptitiously … the river stops rushing and the world holds its breath until all is quiet" (158). This ascension to center stage allows subaltern women to irreverently dismantle the misconstrued stories by women like Emmeline while communicating the newfound aspects of strength that subaltern women can use to overcome the pain that they all share.

Senior mimics this oral storytelling through her proliferation of narrators, careful syntax, and insertion of song to doubly acknowledge the subaltern women of the past and present. While "Lily, Lily" is a story that topically focuses on the abuses that are forced upon both Lily characters and their inherent strengths that allow them to overcome such abuses, this story is one that also speaks and sings for all subaltern women that also suffer from the same abuse that previously could not be spoken or sung about. "Lily, Lily" refrains from the traditional form of syntax that includes grammatical elements such as periods and commas to imitate poetry, which is included in the definition of song that the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary defines as "a short poem or other set of words set to music or meant to be sung" ("Song"). Furthermore, as a series of letters, Senior allows subaltern women to interpret the "Lily, Lily" song as a song of their own. The remixes are endless.

AMBER STICKNEY recently graduated from Georgia Southern University with an English Literature degree accompanied by two minors, Spanish and Gender Studies. This paper was written for her favorite college class of her whole college career, Introduction to Postcolonial Studies. In that class, she discovered her favorite literary genre, as well as what she wanted to do after earning her college degree. Amber plans to pursue graduate school to eventually become a professor of postcolonial literature. In the interim between undergraduate and graduate school, she would like to work for a non-profit, where she can use her writing skills to help her community.

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The Suicide of the Female Transgressor in *The House of Mirth*

Anna Tumlin, University of West Georgia

The death of the female transgressor is a common trope in literature. Many female characters who perform outside of the societal norms for women or who commit various social trespasses, such as stepping outside of the realm of domesticity or claiming ownership over their sexuality and body incur a death sentence. The cycle seems almost inevitable: the woman breaks the social contract of her intended place in society, and the woman dies from an ailment or murder and. This death is usually presented as a direct consequence of the woman's scandalous and unacceptable behavior. If the woman goes out late at night with a man, she might contract malaria from exposure to the elements, like Daisy Miller. If she attempts to blend boundaries, such as those of race and sexuality, she might fall to her death when discovered, like Clare Kendry. Regardless of the particular sort of behavior or the method of her punishment, this order of events turns the novel of manners into a cautionary tale for women, warning them of the consequences of stepping outside their roles in society. However, when the female transgressor commits suicide, it raises many questions about this literary trope as it contradicts both the woman's claim to agency as well as her objectivity to the laws of nature that eliminate these female rebels. In *The House of Mirth,* Lily Bart's social sins begin early on in the novel and continue throughout the remainder of her life. It seems to be an inescapable fact that Lily will have to be punished for her social trespasses; however, Lily takes her fate into her own hands and, in an implied suicide, overdoses on sleeping medicine. In this way, Lily Bart's suicide, as an act of her own agency, announces her rebellion against the mere appearance of social purity, countering the literary trope of death as punishment for the female transgressor.

Exploring the frivolousness and absurdity of the leisure class in New York, *The House of Mirth* follows the novel's protagonist, Lily Bart, from mere poverty to social expulsion. Despite being born into a wealthy family, Lily loses her chance at inherited wealth when her father loses their fortune, realizing her only option to maintain her social status is to marry a wealthy man. However, Lily throws that chance away as she commits a series of social sins, eventually leading to the novel's, and her own, fatal end.

As an unmarried woman of her class, the original central focus of Lily's life is to find and marry a wealthy husband. All of her actions are based around this pursuit: her appearance, her social involvement, and the spaces she positions herself within. When visiting with Selden in his apartment at the Benedick, Lily remarks that she wishes she could live on her own in a similar situation. However, she admits that such a living space is not meant for "poor, miserable, marriageable girls" (Wharton 4). Her main goal is to find a husband who can provide her with wealth and social position, and following the accomplishment of that goal, her only task would be performing as a suitable wife. Wifehood is regarded as a career rather than a role in a romantic relationship. Regarding Lily's age as an unmarried woman, many of her friends and relatives have begun to question her character and desirability as a potential wife for a man of status. She even states that "people are getting tired of [her]" and that she's been "about too long" (Wharton 6). Not being married at her age causes other women to find her strange, thus causing men in her class to begin to think similarly of her. This pursuit of financial security, rather than real love, would undoubtedly lead to the sort of unfulfilled life that Lily, and many other women, experience. It is this very unfulfillment that leads to the rise of the New Woman from the leisure class, a movement Lily Bart might have felt tempted to explore.

Many scholars argue that Lily's death is a careless accident, in line with her character. Robin Beaty wrestles with the idea of Lily's death being unintentional. She asserts that Lily fails to consider her actions; therefore, it seems likely that her overdose was merely accidental and not a suicide (Beaty 272). However, a change in the nature of suicide in the early twentieth century makes this argument unlikely. Up until this point, suicide was an extremely taboo behavior, often attributed to mental health issues. During the early twentieth century, however, the nature of suicide changed drastically. According to an article published in *Social History* discussing suicidology: "during the first half of the twentieth century, people who committed suicide expressed awareness of the offensive nature of their actions, some believing that they were committing a crime" (Perreault et al. 156). Apart from the criminal and offensive nature of the act, suicide would have been a social scandal. Lily, as one raised to be socially conscious, would have certainly been aware of the implications of suicide. Gerty Farrish, also aware

of these implications, has Selden dispose of the empty glass and bottle of chloral in order to avoid the permanent tarnishing of reputation a suicide would bring upon Lily. Since neither Gerty nor Selden truly understand Lily, it is logical that they might assume she would be concerned with her appearances at her death; however, they have overlooked her intentions of suicide as a purposeful rebellion against those sort of pseudo appearances of social purity. Lily would also understand that even risking a death of this sort could mark her as an even greater social offender, a criminal of sorts, and that even if her overdose failed to kill her, it would ensure the impossibility of escaping her social debt. Furthermore, since she has received clear warning from the pharmacist about the dangers of increasing the dosage of the medication, it reveals her actions to be intentionally directed towards committing suicide.

Because of the nature of suicide, Lily's act of ending her own life is in itself a rebellion against the appearances of social purity that she has spent a great portion of her life working to maintain. Suicide, as a taboo and scandalous act, would have been avoided entirely by the upper class that Lily so desperately wanted to fit into. Despite the fact that Selden's financial standing keeps him distant from upper class life, his role as a spectator and connection to those within the society involve him within their lifestyle and even conform him to their values without his awareness. Upon finding Lily Bart lifeless in her bed, Selden begins to admire her apartment and the ways in which Lily had managed to maintain her identity within such a materially impoverished space:

> These were the only traces of luxury, of that clinging to the minute observance of personal seemliness, which showed what her other renunciations must have cost. There was no other token of her personality about the room … a washing-stand, two chairs, a small writing-desk, and the little table near the bed. On this table stood the empty bottle and glass, and from these also he averted his eyes. (Wharton 266)

Selden's unwillingness to acknowledge the things that suggest her death as a suicide show his reluctance to see Lily Bart in the light of the lower class. The bottle and glass also happen to be positioned near the meager objects that represent Lily's poverty from which Selden also averts his eyes, unable to stand the idea of Lily Bart as a person of this sort. These items all contradict his vision of Lily, and therefore he is resistant to them. By leaving out these objects, Lily's suicide serves as her only way of rebelling against the society that has restricted her ability to develop an identity apart from the perceptions of others. She has no agency over her body or her sexuality. It

can be read that she intentionally leaves out the empty bottle and glass to make sure there can be no misconception of her death as accidental. Lily is no longer afraid of social scandal and trespasses, and her suicide clearly demonstrates this.

Lily's suicide also rebels against the appearance of social purity by acting as a resistance toward the values her parents instilled within her. In the last portion of her life, after her encounter with Nettie Struther, Lily recognizes the inward impoverishment that the life her mother pushed her to pursue has left her with: "It was indeed miserable to be poor … But there was something more miserable still—it was the clutch of solitude at her heart, the sense of being swept like a stray uprooted growth down the heedless current of the years. This was the feeling which possessed her now—the feeling of being something rootless and ephemeral" (Wharton 259). Lily realizes that she has no true connection with life, and that is her greatest misfortune: not that she has merely slipped into the material poverty her mother insisted she avoid through the use of her beauty, but rather that she has no connection to her own soul and those around her. She also attributes this disconnect to the way she was raised by her parents, primarily her mother following the death of her father. Lily's suicide comes shortly after this realization, and one can assume that with her death, she has chosen to deny her mother's wish for her. Ruth Yeazell says, in an article entitled "The Conspicuous Wasting of Lily Bart," that her mother objectified Lily's beauty by seeing it as a form of currency to regain their wealth and made it impersonal to her, explaining the disconnect between Lily and her own self (Yeazell 721). Her mother's way of viewing her has caused Lily to see herself as an object for other's gaze and interpretation. As those around her try to know the "real" Lily Bart, it proves an impossible task as Lily's presentation of herself is solely based on who she encounters. This disconnected life leads to her spiritual impoverishment as Lily seeks to flee from in her suicide. Her death serves as Lily's way to reconnect with herself through leaving a world whose standards make life impossible for a woman of her class.

Along with going against the life her mother desired for her, Lily's suicide also rebels against her social role as a woman. Due to her lack of marketable skills, Lily sees her only option to save her from her current poverty is to marry either Mr. Rosedale or Selden. While this would have been expected for an upper-class woman, and indeed aligned with the life Lily led before her re-birth, Lily refuses to do so. She realizes that neither of these men see her as anything more than a damsel in distress who needs their rescuing and she resists reducing herself to that role any longer. William Moddelmog asserts that this rebellion begins at the tableaux vivant. He states that the Reynold's painting Lily portrays is essentially about a wife's dedication and unity to her husband as the woman carves her husband's name on a tree;

however, this figure does not represent Lily Bart and is precisely the reason why she can portray the painting correctly: "But Lily's success is attributable precisely to her unwillingness to marry; because she does not define herself by domestic ideals, she is all the more capable of rendering them artistically" (Moddelmog 349). Her performance at the tableaux vivant rebels against her intended place in society. However, this is a message the audience does not receive and the focus is put on Lily because of her own beauty and sexuality, rather than the appeal of the artwork: "The unanimous 'Oh!' of the spectators was a tribute, not to the brushwork of Reynold's 'Mrs. Lloyd' but to the flesh and blood loveliness of Lily Bart" (Wharton 109). Those in the audience are drawn to Lily's body which is revealed through her sheer drapery, further adding to her social debits. This also shows that before Lily's material impoverishment begins, she already desires an identity outside of domesticity. Refusing to marry Selden or Rosedale in order to escape poverty, Lily choses to remove herself from the narrative of women who marry for upward social mobility. Her suicide allows her agency and control over her body and fate, an ability which is often denied to women. Lily denies the role society, and her mother, have prescribed for her and chooses to take her own life in order to avoid marrying either of the men who would have once seemed suitable partners. In choosing suicide, Lily makes a statement that even death is more honorable than marrying to obtain wealth or to be rescued from a life of material debt.

Through her suicide, Lily also claims a god-like power over her own fate. Until her overdose, everyone but Lily has determined the course of her life. Her mother insisted that she used her beauty as currency to climb the social ladder, Gus Trenor took advantage of her naivety and permanently indebted her to himself, and Mr. Rosedale persisted that her only option to escape her social debts was to marry him. Any option for escaping poverty is at the cost of her own agency and independence. If she chose to repay her outstanding debts to Trenor through her own means, she would be destined to inescapable material poverty, and if she chose to marry Rosedale, she would be indebted to him for paying her debts and removing her from poverty. Even if Lily chose to marry Selden, she would spend the rest of her life shaped by his false perceptions of her. Bonnie Gerard argues:

> Even though Wharton appears to submit Lily to a predetermined doom throughout the novel, she ultimately redeems her heroine from an utterly naturalistic fate … And in *The House of Mirth*, the individual triumphs, if only for a moment, affirming the power of the human imagination to construct its own redemption in a modern world whose often dehumanizing systems of social and material existence have long since lost the capacity to redeem. (Gerard)

Lily's redemption and triumph come through her suicide. Redemption, particularly the ability to construct it for oneself, is another god-like quality that Lily also claims in her action. She acts as a free agent, in control of her body and fate, through taking her own life and thus redeems herself from her unfortunate fate. As Gerard points out, the society Lily finds herself in has lost its capacity for redemption through its restrictive systems of social and material life. Once Lily's debts accumulate, she is unable to escape them without further indebting herself to either Rosedale or Selden. In order to change her fate of being trapped in spiritual and material impoverishment, she takes her own life. This act allows her to control her fate by redeeming herself from it, which can be seen as both a god-like and a masculine power.

Lily also takes on traits of masculinity through the agency she claims over her body in her suicide. In Carol Sapora's article on female doubling, she argues that doubling, the splitting of an individual between two selves, that of the pure man and the lustful man, is often a masculine concept. Women are usually seen as solely good or bad. A woman who is openly sexual and explorative is seen as fallen and a woman who maintains appearances of social purity is revered as a true woman. She states that men can use their will to decide which self will dominate, while women are not considered to be agents over their own behavior. For this reason, women are truly struggling for their independence in this kind of society rather than solely for an innocent and pure selfhood (Sapora 387). Throughout the novel, Lily switches between maintaining appearances of social purity and exploring her sexuality as she does at the tableaux vivant. In reflection, Lily acknowledges these two selves, "She seemed a stranger to herself, or rather there were two selves in her, the one she had always known, and a new abhorrent being to which it found itself chained" (Wharton 120). In these moments of blending the lines between a pure woman and a flirtatious one, her two selves, she takes on masculine traits. Men, as Sapora points out, are permitted, and typically expected, to toggle between the lines of purity and lust. These characteristics, when found in a male, make him stand out as a "true" man and he is often admired for his ability to be both promiscuous and honorable. On the other hand, women are chastised for this behavior and forced to choose between being a woman of honor and a woman who is not only open with her sexuality, but commands control over her body. Lily's desires to cross these boundaries, claim agency over her body, and also be considered a respectable individual, causes her to be abandoned by the friends of her class. She chooses to rebel against the idea that she must perform to meet the rigid standards for upper-class womanhood, which causes her to take the status as a controversial member of their society and later be expelled from it. Her suicide represents her unwillingness to conform to a society that demands she choose between the appearance of

purity and agency. Likewise, her choice to end her life rather than have her class chastise her reveals her determination to prove that women can both control their bodies and be honorable, just as men do.

Lily's suicide is also her final choice to regard morality over mere social appearances. At the end of her life, Lily decides multiple times to let her moral purity dominate over her desire for the appearance of social purity. Carol Sapora also argues, "In order to succeed in such a society, a woman must accept its definition of her and repress her individual self. Deceit and hypocrisy are essential ingredients of a woman's socially acceptable self, necessary to the appearance—if not the fact—of the purity and innocence of ideal womanhood" (Sapora 388). In her suicide, Lily chooses to abandon the deceit and hypocrisy of a pure social appearance that might lead to security within the wealthy class in order to gain fulfillment through behaving with true moral purity. However, her morality is vastly different than how her class defines the term. Members of Lily's class view her as immoral because they view her exposing her body on stage, exiting alone from Selden's apartment, and visiting in Gus Trenor's home when his wife is absent.

However, Lily's choice of moral purity goes beyond mere appearances. Her morality involves choosing to act for the greater good of people over her desires to remain in the class she can find a wealthy husband or social position within. Lily burns letters that could tatter Bertha Dorset's reputation rather than choosing to gain vengeance, she interacts with people of a lower class like Nettie Struther, she repays Trenor despite the ways in which he took advantage of her, and refuses to marry Rosedale for financial and social gain in the absence of love. This choice for moral purity over social appearance surprises Lily at first. Unfamiliar with this choice after rejecting Rosedale, she questions herself: "Had she not sacrificed to one of those abstract notions of honour that might be called the conventionalities of the moral life?" (Wharton 244). Lily's suicide reveals her final disregard for social appearances by removing herself from a society that places the value of women on how they are perceived by others rather than in their sincerity and integrity.

Lily's suicide serves as an act of agency and rebellion against the deceitful principles of performance and appearance that her class required. However, it is important to consider that for Lily Bart, suicide is her only avenue for agency. There are no other available options for her to gain control over her body except through choosing to take her own life. Had Lily chosen to continue living through material poverty, it is possible that she would have discovered spiritual fulfillment and a connection to life. However, as a woman in the society of that century, it is unlikely that she would have ever discovered an avenue for agency or the freedom Selden discussed in terms

of the Republic of the Spirit. While Lily is not punished for her transgressions through an involuntary or accidental death, *The House of Mirth* asserts that women who wish to explore their sexuality and claim their body as their own cannot independently live in a society that chooses to view such actions as sinful and dishonorable. In such a society, women must choose to either adhere to the rigid standards of upholding social appearances or sacrifice themselves in order to make their only claim to true selfhood.

ANNA TUMLIN is an English Education major at the University of West Georgia. She composed this paper for her American Literature I course with Dr. Debra MacComb. Throughout her coursework thus far, she has had the chance to read Emma Donoghue's *Room* and Ruta Sepety's *Between Shades of Gray*, which have become her favorite texts. Following her graduation from UWG, she plans to move to Guatemala and teach ESL as a missionary.

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The Insanity of Morality: Perverseness in Poe

Talmage Wise, Columbia University

Long before *Silence of the Lambs* and *Criminal Minds* captivated viewers with depictions of forensic psychology, Edgar Allan Poe invited his readers to explore the criminal psyche through his tales. His preoccupation with the darker aspects of human psychology, for which he is remembered to this day, is not entirely surprising given the cultural context in which he was living and working. Outside the realm of fiction, pseudoscientific methods of judging—and predicting—criminality, including phrenology and physiognomy, captured the public imagination and made criminal psychology an immensely popular subject of discussion and debate. Poe capitalized on this cultural obsession in his tales. "William Wilson," for instance, explores criminality and morality through allegory. In that tale, the eponymous narrator-protagonist William Wilson—a pseudonym he has chosen for himself—encounters his own *doppelgänger*, a nearly-identical boy at his school who bears the same name. His double possesses a "moral sense … far keener than [his] own" and consistently interferes with Wilson's immoral behavior with "the ungracious character of advice" (Poe 345). In spite of every effort to evade him, his double continues to haunt him, reemerging when Wilson is on the verge of transgression. In the end, Wilson, enraged by one last impingement on his behavior, murders his double, thereby, finally blurring the distinction between the two Wilsons.

Much critical ink has been spilled in arguing how best to understand the split identity of the eponymous character. This essay will endeavor to relate Wilson's dual identity to Poe's own theory of psychology: perverseness. The rarely noted connection between "William Wilson" and Poe's later tales, "The Imp of the Perverse" and "The Black Cat," illuminates the moral implications of perverseness that arise from a conflict between base

desires and the conscience. By positioning the ostensibly moral double in opposition to the protagonist, "William Wilson" challenges traditional conceptions of morality, instead suggesting that tyrannical morality can potentially cause as much harm to an individual as absolute depravity. Reading William Wilson's double as a manifestation of the imp of the perverse highlights Poe's prioritization of self-interest and autonomy over societal conceptions of morality.

William Wilson's double represents a repressed aspect of his identity, which is projected and externalized in the hallucinated *doppelgänger*. In his book, *A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature*, Robert Rogers describes literary doubling as "the splitting up of a recognizable, unified psychological entity into separate, complementary, distinguishable parts represented by seemingly autonomous characters" (5). Thus, both William Wilsons can be recognized as distinct parts of the same "psychological entity" though they function in the story as individual characters. In fact, the reader comes to realize that the second Wilson is merely a product of the first Wilson's hallucination because no other character in the tale ever notices the presence of the *doppelgänger*. Embodying competing aspects of one personality, the characters are complementary; the double manifests a repressed aspect of Wilson's psyche.

Wilson represses this aspect of himself—his superegoical conscience—because he cannot conceive of any ethical duality in others, let alone in himself. His rigid view of moral character is evidenced by his description of Dr. Bransby, the head of the academy where Wilson first encounters his *doppelgänger*. He thinks, "This reverend man, with countenance so demurely benign … could this be he who, of late, with sour visage, and in snuffy habiliments, administered, ferule in hand, the Draconian laws of the academy? Oh, gigantic paradox, too utterly monstrous for solution!" (Poe 339). Wilson is fascinated and disturbed by the "monstrous paradox" of Dr. Bransby expressing two dichotomous personalities. The harsh, punishing schoolmaster and the demure reverend are irreconcilable to Wilson. It is entirely inconceivable that these two versions of Dr. Bransby could co-exist in one man—indeed, it is a problem without solution for Wilson. He even rhetorically questions whether they are the same person. Wilson sees moral character in black and white, and any shades of gray are "utterly monstrous" to him.

Wilson's dichotomous thinking is further reflected in his one-dimensional conception of himself. Wilson describes himself as "self-willed, addicted to the wildest caprices, and a prey to the most ungovernable passions" (Poe 338). The apparent incompatibility between Wilson's "self-willed" nature and his description of himself as "addicted" and "prey" to his desires highlights how closely he identifies himself with his base desires. Because

Wilson conceives of himself as fully "ungovernable" and even "evil," he entirely represses his moral center (Poe 338). He associates fully with what Freud would term his id, willing himself to become an id-ego, where his base desires are expressed freely. His lack of dimensionality is a feature of the allegorical mode in which Poe is writing. In his book *Allegory*, Angus Fletcher writes, "The allegorical hero is not so much a real person as he is a generator of other secondary personalities, which are partial aspects of himself" (Fletcher 35). "William Wilson" literalizes this aspect of the form as Wilson unconsciously generates an alter ego to embody his repressed morality. Like many characters in psychological allegories, the two Wilsons "act on compulsion, continually demonstrating a lack of inner control … [They] suffer from a primary illusion when they imagine they are in control of their own actions" (Fletcher 64). By virtue of their psychic division, each Wilson must cling to his assigned role, never able to stray from the script. As the double is a product of repression, the two will always act in complete opposition; they are, by definition, antithetical to one another. The moral decisions have all already been made—they were made as soon as the ego split. Now, both Wilsons are unfailing in their rigid adherence to the moral code laid out for them by the ongoing act of repression.

Although the story has been traditionally read as a conflict between a libertine narrator and his conscience, "William Wilson" complicates the traditional moral allegory by characterizing the moral double as an antagonist. The *Critical Companion to Edgar Allan Poe* informs the reader simply that the double in this tale "serves as the objectified conscience to the libertine first William Wilson" (Sova 192). In effect, however, "William Wilson" is a perverse allegory, as it subverts the typical allegorical trend of moral development. Fletcher notes, "The typical agent in an allegorical fiction has been seen as a daemon, for whom freedom of active choice hardly exists" (Fletcher 286–87). This is certainly true for William and his double; where William leads, the double follows—and chastises. The story plays out this pattern repeatedly, from the first encounter at Dr. Bransby's academy, to Eton, to Oxford, and finally to the fateful last encounter in Rome. Through all of these encounters, as Fletcher predicts, the ego Wilson is never shown making a moral decision; rather, he always impulsively chooses to do wrong. The expectation from the first is that, left unchecked by the superegoical Wilson, he will always revert to his "evil propensities" (Poe 338). Thus, the moral conflict of the tale lies solely in the conflict between Wilson and his *doppelgänger*. In his perverse twist, though, Poe asks his readers to identify with a self-proclaimed evil character with slim hopes of redemption and to view his double, the moral center of the tale, as the antagonist. Our ostensible hero, the narrator-protagonist of the tale, portrays himself as entirely devoid of a conscience and is seemingly unable

to progress morally because he insists on continuing to repress any moral inclinations.

Crimes committed as a result of an inactive conscience would have been recognizable to Poe's contemporary readers as a form of "moral insanity," a mental disorder theorized by prominent American psychiatrist, Benjamin Rush. In the late eighteenth century, Rush broke with traditional conceptions of mental illness by proposing that a form of insanity could impact an individual's moral faculties while leaving the intellect intact. When his theory eventually entered the public consciousness in the 1830s, it drastically changed courtroom proceedings as entirely lucid, rational people could be found not guilty by reason of insanity. This ideological shift created a kind of moral panic, forcing the public to question how criminals could be punished for giving in to desires that a neurological deficiency prevented them from repressing. Paige Matthey Bynum briefly—and clearly—summarizes Rush's theory of moral insanity as follows:

> Thus in a normal individual, an innate moral sense could stave off the passions while the intellect calmly concluded the proper conduct. But if this moral sense, this power to distinguish between good and evil, were momentarily suspended, the opportunity for calm inquiry would be denied, and the individual's will would become committed to a criminal act before his reason could repudiate it. (Bynum 70)

From a psychoanalytic perspective, the "moral sense" can be compared to Freud's theory of the superego. According to Freud, the superego represents the internalized instruction of the father and other authority figures, whose "injunctions and prohibitions remain powerful in the ego ideal [superego] and continue, in the form of conscience, to exercise the moral censorship" (Freud 643). Thus, a morally insane individual can be seen as lacking, at least temporarily, the superego, and consequently being unable to police their own behavior. While most people have the requisite "innate moral sense" to resist inappropriate desires, morally insane individuals could find themselves subject to an irresistible criminal impulse as the superego would lack the power to "repudiate" the unconscious desires of the id.

While it is tempting to diagnose Wilson as morally insane due to his intense repression of his conscience, Wilson does not fit the criteria for diagnosis because his conscience is still active, despite its externalization. In fact, his antagonistic superego, the double Wilson, is portrayed as excessively harsh. Rogers writes of Poe's tale, "In this disparity between the relatively innocuous nature of the protagonist's crimes and the extreme baseness by which they are characterized in the story itself, the tyrannical severity of

the superego finds expression" (Rogers 25). Poe paints these allegorical figures in black and white and emphasizes the antagonism of the superego through its excessively severe judgment of small crimes, like drinking and cheating at cards. Indeed, in their complete antagonism to one another, the relationship between the doubles seems more representative of Poe's theory of perverseness than moral insanity.

Amid the cultural debates around criminality and moral insanity, Poe developed his own theory of moral deviancy, perverseness, which is most clearly defined in his tale, "The Imp of the Perverse." The narrator of that tale writes, "I am not more certain that I breathe, than that the assurance of the wrong or error of any action is often the one unconquerable *force* [the imp of the perverse] which impels us, and alone impels us to its prosecution" (Poe 827). This description sounds remarkably similar to Rush's theory of moral insanity, in which an "irresistible impulse" would force itself upon the will and coerce the individual into acting immorally (Rush 262). Poe himself was certainly well versed in the theory of moral insanity, as he worked as a reporter on the "murder-by-reason-of-moral-insanity trial of James Wood," who was accused of murdering his own daughter (Bynum 72–73). Thus, his own theory was likely influenced by his knowledge of moral insanity, and particularly its courtroom applicability. Significantly, perverseness, unlike moral insanity, is a universal theory. Poe's narrator presents perverseness as "an innate and primitive principle of human action" (827). Rush's theory of moral insanity proposed the opposite, arguing that for most people "innate moral sense could stave off the passions" (Bynum 70). Thus, Poe theorizes that everyone may find themselves subject to "unconquerable forces," while moral insanity restricted a lack of autonomy to a select few who could be diagnosed.

Poe had actually written about perverseness in "The Black Cat" years before he defined the theory more philosophically in "The Imp of the Perverse." The description in this story helps to clarify the logic of perverseness. The only major difference in the theorization of perverseness in this tale is the lack of a personified imp to embody the theory. Here, "the spirit of perverseness" drives the narrator to kill his most beloved pet, the titular black cat (Poe 599). He writes, "One morning, in cool blood, I slipped a noose about [my cat's] neck and hung it to the limb of a tree;—hung it with the tears streaming from my eyes, and with the bitterest remorse at my heart;—hung it *because* I knew that it had loved me, and *because* I felt it had given me no reason of offence;—hung it *because* I knew that in doing so I was committing a sin" (Poe 599). Those three italicized repetitions of "*because*"—Poe's own emphasis—are key here since they highlight the counterintuitive logic of perverseness. One might expect an "although" to take their place—as in, "I hung it [although] I knew that it had loved me, and

[although] I felt it had given me no reason of offence"—but perverseness turns this logic on its head and forces the individual to act against his best interests. It is a spirit of antagonism. The narrator, a self-proclaimed animal lover, hangs his cat "*because*" it loves him and "*because*," in doing so, he is committing a grievous sin—a sin he feels will "jeopardize [his] immortal soul" (Poe 599). The perverse desire is not associated with any joy or satisfaction; the deed only causes him immense pain and sorrow. Moreover, the deed is performed "in cool blood," making clear that the narrator acted while in full possession of reason, not in a moment of passionate upheaval. Though he feels "bitterest remorse" as he murders his beloved cat, his tears only fuel his perverse imp-ulse to do wrong.

The backwards logic of perverseness clarifies the relationship between Poe's theory and contemporary beliefs about moral insanity. Like William Wilson, the narrators of Poe's tales of perverseness could not be described as morally insane because they know they are doing wrong—their superego remains intact. While they may experience the imp of the perverse as an "irresistible impulse," they ultimately make the conscious decision to do wrong (Rush 262). Significantly, the narrator of "The Black Cat" does not lack a conscience; he is weeping with "the bitterest remorse" as he kills his cat (Poe 599). Though less outwardly emotional, the narrator of "The Imp of the Perverse" explicitly tells us the imp is often implicated in "the wrong or error of any action" (Poe 827). For a person who is morally insane, there is no choice between right and wrong—good and evil—because those divisions have lost all meaning due to some physical failure of the moral center of the brain. The very fact that these narrators can still recognize right from wrong places them in the realm of the depraved, or perverse, as opposed to the morally insane. Through the lens of psychoanalysis, the imp of the perverse can be seen as a failure of repression that arises as a direct result of the conflict between the id and the superego. These perverse desires only come to consciousness, and consequently force action, precisely because they inspire conflict between the id and the superego.

The *doppelgänger* in "William Wilson" can be seen, not only as an externalized projection of Wilson's conscience, but also as a manifestation of the imp of the perverse. At first glance, these two interpretations seem to be at odds. On the surface, perverseness is interpreted as a mechanism of *immorality* driving its victims to commit heinous acts in order to ultimately bring about their own destruction. The narrator of "The Black Cat," afflicted as he is by the spirit of perverseness, tells us he hung the cat in order to commit "a deadly sin that would … jeopardize [his] immortal soul" (Poe 599). In light of this explicitly religious context, an anti-moral sentiment seems clear in Poe's tales of perverseness. At first glance, perverseness might even be seen as equivalent to sinfulness. Examining perverseness through

"William Wilson," however, helps to clarify Poe's theory by emphasizing that it need not always lead to immoral actions; indeed, from an outside perspective, Wilson's superego would be seen to inspire moral behavior. Perverseness, then, is not limited to the domain of immoral behavior, but is fueled by an intrapsychic tension that pushes its victims to act against their own self-interest.

Wilson's double represents a mocking kind of morality that only drives Wilson to destroy himself further. The sole flaw in the double's mimicry is an apparent physical weakness that never allows his voice to rise above a whisper. Wilson tells us, "[E]ven my voice did not escape him. My louder tones were, of course, unattempted, but then the key, it was identical; *and his singular whisper, it grew the very echo of my own*" (Poe 344). Wilson's double is an "echo," a distorted, reflected version of him that has been dampened through the act of reflection. The vocal deficiency may detract from the outward likeness to Wilson; however, it emphasizes the double's resemblance to the perverse and the superego, highlighting the truly internal nature of the double's communication. In effect, Wilson's double is a perverse, personified ego ideal, the part of the superego that represents an idealized version of the ego (Freud 643). By showing Wilson what he is not, the double does not inspire better behavior, though Wilson does acknowledge that he may "have been a better, and thus a happier man" if he had followed the advice of his double (345). Instead, the double only sparks conflict between them, which spirals from "banter or practical joke[s]" into physical violence and, eventually, murder (343). Like the other manifestations of the imp of the perverse, the double opposes himself directly to Wilson's wishes; however, in this case, the opposition takes physical form because Wilson has projected and externalized the imp into his *doppelgänger*. Indeed, the priority of the tale itself does not seem to be morality as much as the intrapsychic conflict between the Wilsons. Charles E. May has pointed out specifically that while the double ostensibly represents Wilson's conscience, and indeed often acts in that role, "in his description of his motivation for telling the story, nowhere does he mention guilt" (97). Moreover, May notes that the double "has a sarcastic and sneering smile" in the first half of the story, implying a "perverse side of [the] divided self," rather than a straightforward moral compass (98).

Significantly, recognition of the perverse moral impulse as a part of the self only exacerbates the tension caused by the conflicting desires. Eventually, tired "of his [double's] frequent officious interference with [his] will," Wilson lashes out against the superegoical *doppelgänger* in a moment of aggression (Poe 345). The scene resembles the murder sequence in "The Tell-Tale Heart"—shaded lantern revealing the face of the victim in a darkened bedroom—as Wilson sneaks into his double's room at Dr. Bransby's

academy, ostensibly in order to play a practical joke on him. What he sees there terrifies him. He writes,

> Were these—*these* the lineaments of William Wilson? I saw, indeed, that they were his, but I shook as if with a fit of the ague in fancying they were not. What *was* there about them to confound me in this manner? I gazed;—while my brain reeled with a multitude of incoherent thoughts. Not thus he appeared—assuredly not thus— in the vivacity of his waking hours … Was it, in truth, within the bounds of human possibility, that what I now saw was the result, merely, of the habitual practice of this sarcastic imitation? (Poe 347)

While Wilson never explicitly shares with his reader what he saw that night that inspired him to leave the academy never to return again, it can be inferred that Wilson, for the first time, recognizes the double as a part of himself. He shines the light of his lantern—and the light of his consciousness—on the repressed aspect of his being and is disturbed to find himself. What he had supposed to be merely a "sarcastic imitation" of his being is, in actuality, a part of himself that he has failed to recognize. The moral aspect of his being, antithetical to the identity Wilson has carefully crafted, terrifies him. His terror is mirrored in the language of the narration here, as the generally measured voice of Wilson reaches a sort of fever pitch, emphasizing his "incoherent thoughts." Following this recognition, Wilson redoubles his efforts of repression. The id-ego has been threatened by its encounter with the superego, and in order to protect himself, Wilson flees, throwing himself further into vice to solidify his self-image—that of a dandy and a profligate. He writes, "Excited by such appliances to vice, my constitutional temperament broke forth with redoubled ardor, and I spurned even the common restraints of decency in the mad infatuation of my revels" (Poe 349). The criticizing efforts of the superego only end up driving Wilson deeper into vice because he must re-establish his conception of self.

This antagonistic response demonstrates that, in a sense, the original Wilson is an imp of the perverse to his *doppelgänger* as well. The division between them cannot be bridged; therefore, as long as they both survive, they will always antagonize one another. In his essay "Grotesques and Arabesques," Daniel Hoffman writes, "each half of the split ego has its own Imp of the Perverse—Wilson himself is such an Imp to Wilson, the first Wilson reveling in obliquity in acquiescence to a deep impulse in himself which outrages the moral imperative represented by [the second] Wilson" (Hoffman 18). Each side of Wilson is equally abhorrent to the other. In fact, one can easily imagine the story being told from the perspective of the other Wilson. That story would read much like the classic examples

of perverseness. In that version, the reader would see Wilson's base desires to cheat at cards, to sleep with a married woman, and so on, being forced upon an unwilling moral protagonist. However, the reader is only given the story from the perspective of the id-ego Wilson. This point of view places the superego in the role usually played by the id: the imp of the perverse.

"William Wilson," seen through the lens of perverseness, illuminates the fact that, to Poe, a tyrannical superego may be just as harmful as a deficient one—the hallmark of moral insanity. The allegorical mode of the story embodies perverseness in the conflict between the id-ego and the superego aspects of Wilson. This same struggle, though, can be seen implicitly taking place within the minds of the characters in Poe's tales of perverseness. In those stories, the characters do not commit atrocious acts simply due to their base id desires—that would be moral insanity allowing the id to act impulsively without reproach from the superego. Rather, the id, represented by the imp of the perverse, forces these actions specifically because of the tension from the superego. The narrator of "The Black Cat" gains no pleasure or satisfaction from killing his cat; he does so only because the superego opposes the impulse. In the case of "William Wilson," perverseness arises due to the conflict of the oppressive superego attempting to thwart the actions of the id as well.

The key difference between these versions of perverseness is not the source of the conflict but where the ego—and thus the reader—aligns itself. In the classic tales of perverseness, the ego is allied with the superego in a losing battle against the id-based desires of the imp. However, in "William Wilson," the id-ego confronts a despotic morality in the form of the superego *doppelgänger*. This shift in perspective elucidates that perverseness is the product of force exerted from both the id and superego.

Indeed, the idea of morality itself as perverse is not entirely unique to "William Wilson," as the narrators of both classic tales of perverseness achieve their ultimate self-destruction through ostensibly moral actions. The narrator of "The Imp of the Perverse," explicitly informs his reader, "we might, indeed, deem this perverseness a direct instigation of the Arch-Fiend, were it not occasionally known to operate in furtherance of good" (Poe 829). Perverseness, while destructive, is not inherently evil in any of its iterations. In both "The Imp of the Perverse" and "The Black Cat," however, perverse morality enters the scene solely in the form of confession. The more straightforward of the two comes in "The Imp of the Perverse" when the narrator fixates on the idea of confession and is directly compelled to forsake his safety by the imp of the perverse. After literally getting away with murder, he tells himself, "I am safe—yes—if I be not fool enough to make open confession!" (Poe 831). Of course, this wayward thought inspires the imp of the perverse to force self-destruction by instigating a confession.

In "The Black Cat," the perversely moral turn is subtler. The story does not specifically attribute the action to perverseness; however, it is implicated by the very ludicrousness of the action. The narrator calls the attention of the authorities to the exact spot that he should be drawing attention away from—the space in the wall where he has entombed his wife. Though this action is not specifically attributed to perverseness, "the rabid desire" with which he acts "scarcely [knowing] what [he] uttered at all" calls to mind the force of perverseness acting against the better interests of the ego (Poe 605). Indeed, it resembles the manic intensity of the narrator of "The Imp of the Perverse" as he becomes "blind, and deaf, and giddy" just before confessing (Poe 831).

The main goal of perverseness at all times is self-destruction—the Freudian death instinct. According to Freud, "an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things" (Freud 612). It follows, then, that the death instinct is an urge to "return to the inanimate state," or, put another way, "the aim of all life is death" (Freud 613). Clive Bloom reconciles the external aggression associated with perverseness with this self-destructive tendency, recognizing perverseness as "the destructive impulse that makes the organism antagonistic to all other organisms [until its] aggression is, via these others, turned against itself, so that in its death it finds its own will" (Bloom 92). The channeling of aggression outward to other organisms only serves to ensure the ultimate destruction of the self. Indeed, perverseness ultimately drives the narrators of both tales to commit murder. These crimes will result in the imminent execution of both narrators, thereby eventually satisfying their suicide impulse through outward aggression. At this point in the tales of perverseness, though, the conflict between the superego and the id shifts. Previously, perverseness in both of these tales had been focused on countering the superego to achieve id-based desires. Now, though, the superego aligns with the role of the imp of the perverse in order to ensure the destruction of the narrator. Significantly, in both of these classic tales of perverseness, the superego effects the ultimate destruction of the narrators.

In the end, Wilson joins the ranks of Poe's other murderer-narrators. In Wilson's case, though, he bridges the gap between perverseness and moral insanity because by murdering his double—his superego—Wilson essentially renders himself morally insane. At this point in the story, Hoffman asserts, "the Imp of the Perverse triumphs and rules unchallenged" (18). The psychic division between the id-ego and the superego is made absolute and irreversible by this final, ultimate act of repression. Wilson chooses moral insanity over the tension caused by his dichotomous conception of self. Perverseness has come to the only possible end, as Wilson has finally enacted the suicide impulse by murdering his *doppelgänger*—"*in my death,*

see by this image, which is thine own, how utterly thou hast murdered thyself"
(Poe 357). Indeed, the story leaves ambiguous how successful Wilson has
been in enacting this impulse when he looks in the mirror, seeing his "own
image, but with features all pale and dabbled in blood" (Poe 356). It is
entirely possible that Wilson not only succeeded in murdering his superego,
but also killed himself in the process. In that case, Wilson is telling his story
from beyond the grave.

Either way, that fatal decision ends up turning Wilson into a nervous
neurotic, not unlike Rush's morally insane criminals. As Valentine C. Hubbs
writes in her article "The Struggle of the Wills," "This final act of repression,
which destroys any hope of Wilson One to attain psychic harmony, turns
him into the guilt-ridden neurotic who has narrated the story" (Hubbs 78).
Many scholars have noted Wilson's frantic neuroticism, which is particularly
clear in the writing at the beginning of the tale. Wilson writes, "This has
been already too much an object for the scorn—for the horror—for the
detestation of my race" (Poe 337). The repetition of threes is indicative of
a form of insanity and even mirrors some of the language found in Poe's
later tale of moral insanity, "The Tell-Tale Heart." There, the narrator states
early on, "The disease had sharpened my senses—not destroyed—not dulled
them" (Poe 555).

Consequently, the conclusion of "William Wilson" demonstrates not
only moral insanity but also the insanity of morality. The punishing super-
ego is just as damaging to the psyche as the seemingly baser desires of the
id, and indeed it can fulfill the same destructive role as the classic imp of
the perverse. As Freud writes, "We find that the excessively strong super-ego
which has obtained a hold upon consciousness rages against the ego with
merciless violence … What is now holding sway in the super-ego is, as it
were, a pure culture of the death instinct" (Freud 654). The superegoical
double of "William Wilson" is certainly "excessively strong" as it perpetually
haunts Wilson, countering him whenever he is on the verge of succeeding
at one of his base goals. The "pure culture of the death instinct" is finally
satisfied in the final moments of the story, as Wilson murders the superego,
and in doing so, murders himself.

By inviting us to identify with William Wilson, essentially an id-ego
fusion, Poe creates a perverse allegory that challenges the typical conception
of morality. Classic Freudian thought would place the id in the position of
the part of the psyche being repressed; however, in this tale, the tyrannical
superego takes that role, consistently acting out against the id-aligned ego in
a self-destructive manner. Thus, Poe seems to posit that moral insanity may
not solely be the result of a lack of superego, or moral conscience. Rather,
an overactive conscience may create an intrapsychic tension that results in
a form of moral insanity itself. By allegorically associating the conscience

with perverseness, Poe implicitly argues that an oppressive morality can be just as destructive to the ego as a fully deficient moral center. The insanity of morality—embodied in the superego double—causes Wilson to sacrifice pleasure and act against his own interests, ultimately leading to the complete destruction of the ego. Through his tales of perverseness, Poe suggests that self-interest and autonomy should be prioritized above general ideas of morality. Too rigid an adherence to black and white ideas of morality can lead to intrapsychic tension, which is ultimately only destructive.

TALMAGE WISE is a recent graduate of the combined BA/MA program in English Literature at Columbia University. He completed his undergraduate education in 2018 with a double major in English and Psychology before continuing on to receive a Master's degree in English and Comparative Literature the following year. His primary area of study is the nineteenth-century British novel, with a particular focus on Gothic fiction. This paper was written in his senior year for a seminar on Edgar Allan Poe.

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