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Beyond Words: Language Forms and their Limits in *Moby-Dick*

Leah Alday, Saint Mary's College

Language has always been beautiful and astounding, but few people consider the numerous forms it can take. Even fewer people admit the inadequacy of words. Books are held up as magnificent art forms: shrines of thought and testaments to the power of the written word. Yet, one novel manages to drown this argument in the weight of its many pages. *Moby-Dick* is a long, arduous read with the main plot only really occurring within the last few pages of the novel, but the length of the tale and the volume of its words still serve a purpose: to undermine the idea that the written word is the most powerful form of communication. Herman Melville manages to completely lay bare the inadequacies of written and spoken language by exploring multiple forms of communication and by attempting to convey the messages belonging to those other forms through the written word.

Melville sets his stage not very subtly: he goes beyond the scope of the standard novel and includes a play, soliloquies, short stories, scientific discussions, and art critiques. He breaks through the barriers erected by society and the common emphasis on the importance of the written word by abusing the power of literature. He recycles words to show just how little they can actually convey: the word "nameless" appears a total of twelve times within the novel (Melville 22, 26, 37, 105, 109, 130, 141, 159, 161, 164, and twice on 204) and he admits to having an inability to describe things accurately. In fact, according to Maurice S. Lee, an English Professor at Boston University, Melville very nearly goes too far in a quest to prove his point and is "ambitious to the point of hubris" (Lee 1). Lee treats an attempt at understanding the text of *Moby-Dick* as a never-ending quest, which he still seems determined to attempt because the novel has so much to communicate, limited as it is by the written word. After reading this article, it still seems difficult to accuse Melville of hubris when he so immediately recognizes the failure of language and communication from the very start of

the book. Melville leads the reader on a journey through linguistic failures and shortcomings and he does this starting with visual arts.

In the third chapter of the novel, Ishmael describes an oil painting hanging in the Sprouter-Inn. As he attempts to explain its appearance, he finds that words cannot accurately describe what he's seeing and gives a description that does not allow for a proper recreation of the painting; in fact, Ishmael cannot decide what exactly he's seeing, whether it's chaos, a whale leaping over a ship, or some "nameless yeast" (Melville 26). Further along in the novel, he also discusses various artistic representations of whales in wood-carvings, imprints and illuminations in books, and sculpture. He continues to find fault with each representation, while still growing frustrated with his inability to fully explain the artworks he's seeing. The wood-carvings lack depth and detail, imprints on book covers are called fish or dolphins and yet he believes they were failed attempts at depicting whales, and sculptures cannot ever capture the true magnitude, size, and grace of a living whale. What worsens this is that many of the artists have never seen a whale in person. While Ishmael's frustrations with the inaccurate depictions of whales are understandable, he also recognizes that he cannot even explain how the artworks fail as he himself could not accurately draw a whale nor can he fully describe what one looks like.

Ishmael does not consider, however, the visual art of text. Fonts and letter-styling can affect a person's understanding of a text in addition to the meaning of the actual words. In an article by Frank Davey of Western University, the concept of text working with art and interacting with an image is toyed with. Davey's main purpose in writing this article is to explain how text existing in a state before it is interpreted (parataxis) can be mixed with visual cues or pictures to produce a new meaning from the newly created text-image hybrid (Davey 37). Davey states "Every sentence uttered or printed can be mistrusted or may indeed be provisionally reliable. Often the handwritten messages on postcards attempt no reference to the accompanying image. Those messages do not always reach their intended recipient but the images always do" (Davey 45). Applying Davey's argument to Ishmael's description of art, in particular the lengthy description of the single oil-painting in the Sprouter-Inn, it could be said that Ishmael's descriptions of the artwork are highly inaccurate and rely solely on his bias. He claims that the reason that so many artists cannot capture what a

whale looks like is because they have not seen one, but he admits that even whalers rarely see the whole of a whale and when they do, the whale is usually already dead. Furthermore, Ishmael cannot accurately communicate in a way to provide the reader with a full experience and understanding of the painting's appearance. Had Ishmael included some reproduction of copy of the painting or the various artworks he discusses, then the reader would be better able to understand just what Ishmael is describing. The details Ishmael gives barely even serves to give the reader a sense of the painting's colors; it really only mentions the black spot in the middle and the three blue lines. Had Melville imbued his narrator with the power to paint or draw alongside his text, perhaps the meaning would have been clearer and would have more layers of meaning conveyed. He claims meanings that were not immediately recognizable with text alone, became "visible when the page, sign-board, poster or post-card was itself represented and displayed" (Davey 39).

Most written language is based on some sort of visual cue from the real or natural world. For example, the Chinese written language has "pictorial origins based on nature." This means that many of the symbols used in written Chinese are based off of how the objects which the symbols words refer to appear in nature (Edwards and Cho 43). An "experiment" performed by the Royal College of Art experimented with this idea of text as something derived from nature. It dealt with students who were native Chinese speakers and others who were native English speakers. During the experiment, students took this concept into account and invented their own written language forms based off of what they observed and wanted to convey. The students started with very literal drawings that steadily shifted into something more symbolic. A large portion of the activity was then spent "translating thought into image and then word, with partners guessing meaning and discussing what it felt like to communicate in this more visual manner" (Edwards and Cho 43). In theory, Ishmael could have found some way to create his own pictograms or hieroglyphs. This is especially valid when one considers the hieroglyphs of Queequeg's tattoos. They clearly hold some deeper meaning that Ishmael cannot translate and nor can Queequeg completely translate these more artistic visual representations into spoken or written language. However the attempt to translate and inscribe them onto the coffin signifies their importance and makes the action of the inscribing in and of

itself an attempt at communication, even if it only conveys a sort of desperation to preserve something inherently important to a single person's identity and past.

On this note, actions and body-language create a place for more physical forms of language and communication. A person's posture, their facial expression, their method of walking, the small sound of a sigh or laugh, and even the insignificant actions they perform are all forms of communication. Posture and facial expression can indicate a person's interest and mood. Ishmael comments on Ahab's stance during a night-watch:

> I was struck with the singular posture he maintained. . . . There was an infinity of firmest fortitude, a determinate, unsurrenderable willfulness, in the fixed and fearless, forward dedication of that glance. Not a word he spoke; nor did his officers say aught to him; though by all their minutest gestures and expressions, they plainly showed the uneasy, if not painful, consciousness of being under a troubled master-eye. And not only that, but moody stricken Ahab stood before them with a crucifixion in his face; in all the nameless regal overbearing dignity of some mighty woe. (Melville 109)

Ahab's body language in this scene marks him as a leader who is highly disturbed by something such as his defeat at the fins of Moby-Dick and the resulting obsession with the whale. The officers too are choosing to communicate without words because more physically based forms of communication are effective in this instance and words would add only unnecessary trouble. Ahab's posture and bearing is compared to ancient Danish warrior-kings and Ishmael calls him "lord of leviathans" (Melville 113). Without words, Ahab is able to demonstrate his ability as and position of leader. Consequently, Ahab's actions often had a stronger effect on the crew and the story than some of his words and speeches. So, when Ahab throws his pipe out to sea, it's more than just his own despair and fate that's reflected. Indeed, Ahab hurls his smoking pipe overboard because it no longer brings him the comfort it used to and rather than keeping a now useless item, he chooses to destroy it so that he won't have to be constantly reminded of the peace he lost (Melville 112-113). Smoking had been an action indicative of

peace or relaxation, the pipe itself able to communicate a sense of tranquility to its user. However, once its lost this ability, Ishmael compares Ahab's final puff of it to a dying whale's final water spout. The action has lost its former meaning and now merely serves to communicate Ahab's inner despair and turmoil. Throwing the pipe away acts as a public acceptance and declaration of this: the crew sees Ahab's actions and, Ishmael at least, seems to understand the negative emotions inadvertently communicated to them.

Even Ahab's very steps and methods of walking can convey his feelings, with or without his intention to do so. Shortly after Ahab throws away his pipe, he "lurchingly" walks away (Melville 113). Normally, a jerky, unstable gait would be associated with the use of a false-leg, but looking at this as movement, as a form of expression – just as dance has been openly recognized as such for many years – there is a greater significance; indeed,: it further expresses Ahab's dismay and is a first glimpse into Ahab's inner weakness. In this particular moment, Ahab would love to be viewed as someone strong, in spite of any physical problems, but this "lurching" shows that he is not focused on his movements so both the reader and crew get a glimpse of Ahab's fragility. This moment of failure to communicate a strong-front can be contrasted with another scene, in which a whale is spotted and Ahab walks with "quick, side-lunging strides" (Melville 192). Here, Ahab's gait shows his manic excitement at the possibility of finally facing his foe in battle: he is once more able to set himself toward a goal and move efficiently, communicating in his every movement his inner desire and drive to conquer anything that stands in his way.

Stubbs, too, has this obsession with his own power to overcome nature and the natural world. Unfortunately for him, he does not know how to tell a whale or nature this thought. Instead, he uses his actions to convey what words cannot.[1] Stubbs eats a whale steak to assert his dominance and masculinity: he eats it in front of the entire crew to prove his strength. This seemingly disgusting meal choice is actually a small way of communicating power, strength, determination, and an iron stomach.

Unlike the absolute deliberateness of Stubbs' actions, there are also unintended linguistic forms. Appearance can intentionally or unintentionally communicate much about a person. In fact, Ishmael spends an entire chapter on the color of Moby-Dick and what is communicated by the color white:

> But though without dissent this point be fixed, how is mortal man to account for it? To analyse it, would seem impossible. Can we, then, by the citation of some of those instances wherein this thing of whiteness--though for the time either wholly or in great part stripped of all direct associations calculated to impart to it aught fearful, but nevertheless, is found to exert over us the same sorcery, however modified;--can we thus hope to light upon some chance clue to conduct us to the hidden cause we seek? (Melville 162)

Throughout the chapter, Ishmael cites various instances in which the color appears from religious ceremonies, where it is viewed as a part of purification, to albinos and how they are often rejected by society or more easily killed in the wild (which is at odds with Moby-Dick's uncanny ability to survive). Even in American Sign Language (ASL), the sign for the color white is unusual: most of the colors are designated by forming the first letter and shaking the hand. To distinguish brown from blue, brown is the letter "b" stroked down the side of the face (like hair). Red and pink are made to parallel the application of lipstick with the sign for their respective first letters. White however, does not seem to have any particular reason for its sign since it is not a shaken "w" sign. Instead, it is formed by placing the right hand flat on the chest and pulling away while closing the fingers of the right hand (*American Sign Language Dictionary*).

FIGURE 1
SOURCE: *AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE DICTIONARY*

This more personal gesture seems to help separate white as a color in sign language as well. It no longer follows the normal flow of sign language. According to Ishmael, white can be interpreted with reverence as a symbol of holiness or it can be interpreted as disconcerting and "unnatural:" "But not yet have we solved the incantation of this whiteness, and learned why it appeals with such power to the soul; and more strange and far more portentous—why, as we have seen, it is at once the most meaning symbol of spiritual things, nay, the very veil of the Christian's Deity; and yet should be as it is, the intensifying agent in things the most appalling to mankind" (Melville 165). Either way, it conveys separation: the white color of Moby-Dick's skin distinguishes him from other whales and elevates him as more monstrous and challenging.

This aspect of the physical connected to and communicating the spiritual is reflected in Ahab's self: "his torn body and gashed soul bled into one another; and so interfusing made him mad" (Melville 156). In "Of Blood and Words: Ahab's Rhetorical Body," an article about the physical as a reflection of the spiritual or inner thoughts, the writer discusses how "his [Ahab's] 'madness' resides precisely in a leakage between figure and concept, between body and soul" (Larson 21). This article focuses on the connection between the spiritual and the physical. Larson argues that the loss of a leg has unbalanced Ahab's spirit along with his sanity because the destruction of a single part has ruined the smooth functioning of the whole. Larson treats Ahab's crippling at the hands—or rather fins—of the whale as something purely affecting Ahab's inner self. However, this is not entirely accurate: crippling and amputations are both part of a person's outer appearance and can inadvertently convey ideas too. Ahab's loss of a leg marks him as a survivor and communicates strength. The fact that he replaced his leg with whale-bone is a way for him to assert dominance and prove to his crew (to communicate to them) that he does not live in fear of whales and that he can still conquer the leviathan. Ishmael also mentions how a missing leg can serve as proof of life: whaling voyages are dangerous and people who return whole do not always seem as authentic as those who return injured. In fact, he references an unnamed amputee whose disability serves to convey the truth of a story he tells: he lost his leg in a whale attack (Melville 221).

Moby-Dick, himself, is described as having a physical deformity in his jaw (Melville 155). Comparing this to the amputee, it makes

sense to say this this is trying to convey the truth of the existence of some nearly mythical sounding being. Larson fails to engage this aspect, that the whale is also disabled and separated from its natural state where the spirit and body can properly function and communicate to each other: Moby-Dick is further separated from other whales by not being a calm animal spirit but marked by his "intelligent malignity" (Melville). In some way, when Moby-Dick bit off Ahab's leg he communicated and transferred this spiritual deformation by altering the physical and communicating with violent actions.

Despite all this, the form of communication that has possibly the best chance of success is gestural language. In a scientific study, language cues were given and the person interpreting these cues had to guess what might come next. Audio, textual, and gestural cues were employed, and gestural cues were shown to have the most success, while overall visual cues served to better indicate meaning much earlier than any of the audio cues (Alday, Schlesewsky, Bornkessel-Schlesewsky). This study backed its results using electrophysical activity in the brain; even at a level of the brain run purely on chemicals and electricity, gestural language holds its own. In another study done by psychologists, this idea was developed a little differently: monologues with gestures were compared with dialogues in which hand signals and other movements were used. When a single person was speaking and gesturing, it served more as a way to bring focus or clarity on a single point, but when gestures occurred in a dialogue it could also serve to further communicate emotions or sympathies with someone (Cassel and Stone). Applying this to the novel, it makes sense that Ishmael focuses in on the subtle gesticulations of the crew and, more importantly, on "The Tail", which he describes as the one thing that a whaler can see and have something "said" to him by a whale. One of Ishmael's first comments on the ability of the tail to gesture compares it to human arms: "Such is the subtle elasticity of the organ I treat of, that whether wielded in sport, or in earnest, or in anger, whatever be the mood it be in, its flexions are invariably marked by exceeding grace. Therein no fairy's arm can transcend it" (Melville 294). The tail is free from the impediment of spoken words: it purely functions with gestural communications and therefore, can more effectively use such a communication method than a man's arm. Not only that, but the tail's gestures can communicate to both

whales and humans. Its gestures overcome a linguistic barrier between species. However, Ishmael also admits that the language barrier is still there, even if gestural language allows for a level of predicted meaning or emphasis:

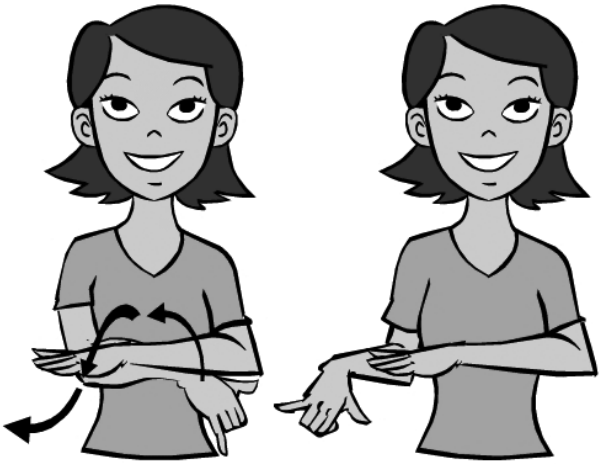
> The more I consider this mighty tail, the more do I deplore my inability to express it. At times there are gestures in it, which, though they would well grace the hand of man, remain wholly inexplicable. In an extensive herd, so remarkable, occasionally, are these mystic gestures, that I have heard hunters who have declared them akin to Free-Mason signs and symbols; that the whale, indeed, by these methods intelligently conversed with the world. (Melville 296)

This whale's tail evokes an emotional response because it stirs some sort of emotional response in Ishmael: even if he does not know what the whale may have been attempting to "say" he is at least able to understand that something was meant to be communicated and he has his own guess at what that might be, which, since gesture is involved, is the most scientifically accurate way to guess a meaning.

Ishmael also treats gesture as a very basic form of communication. He works under the assumption that anyone) can gesture and that gesturing is universal. He supports this belief with his discussion of the tail, saying that if he cannot understand such simple gestures, then he can never hope to understand the expression of a whale's face. To an extent his beliefs are not unfounded because gestures preceded what would constitute as spoken language. Grunts, sighs, and yells were around since vocal cords first existed and are not viewed as verbal communication; more significantly, these were more often used even after spoken language was first developed since it tended to be slightly more universal (Corballis). However, gestures developed differently in different parts of the world. Cultures had to develop based on available resources and therefore, just as with spoken language, some concepts have more gestures devoted to them in certain areas than they do in other areas (Corballis). For example, Ishmael interprets some of Queequeg's gestures and hand signals as references to marriage,;while for Queequeg, they seem to be more natural and could be simply referring to friendship.

Gestures have developed into their own language as well. Across the world there are many types of sign language and even ASL has subsets like BSL and PSE.[2] These gestures are often imitations of nature or designed to mimic the shape of an image. One of the signs for "whale" in ASL is designed to look like the tail of a whale moving in water ("American Sign Language Dictionary" Fig. 2). The pointer, middle, and ring finger of the right hand are folded down so that the thumb and pinkie figure can act as the flared portions of the tail, while the left arm represents the surface of water.

FIGURE 2



This means that Ishmael's theory of the whale using gesture as a means of communication is very probable, especially since it could have developed differently to accommodate for the differences in physical form between Ishmael and the whale and what would most often need to be communicated within a species.

Gesture is a valuable form of communication and it can be used in conjunction with other linguistic forms. In an article on Gesture Theory, Dafydd Gibbon addresses this:

> Gestures are an essential part of communication – not only the gesticulatory body language of everyday face-to-face communication and the signing of deaf communicators, but also in the production of speech and in the production of acts of writing, typing, manual Morse code

> transmission, semaphoring and 'talking drums' and many other varieties of communication. In the broadest sense, music performance can also be seen as non-propositional gestural communication, though with such a generalization about gestural communication one rapidly becomes overwhelmed with the dimensionality of the concept. (1)

Using gesture with other communication forms makes both the gestures and the other communication form(s) more effective. This is why it's common for Ahab to use hand motions to help bring the crew to order and explain what he wants and why actions like shaking a fist at a whale seems so much more passionate or angry than just yelling at the same creature.

Language comes in many shapes and forms: whether you sign, write, draw, or vocalize, your ideas can still be communicated. Unfortunately, each form also has its own drawbacks and failings. No idea can ever be guaranteed to be successfully communicated. Combining forms of communication can definitely improve the communication process but it does not make it foolproof. As Ishmael often comments, only people who have actually seen whales can have even a remote possibility of understanding these great lords of the sea. Ishmael's, and really Melville's point, is that language, particularly written and spoken, is innately fallible; instead, experience is the ultimate form of communication. By experiencing an event, or even by just experiencing a "dialogue" using multimedia and many types of communication, ideas and emotions are communicated far more effectively.

NOTES

1. Although in Chapter 135: The Chase – Third Day, Stubbs also vocally declares the actions he takes to spite the whale and show that, to the last, Stubbs did in fact maintain some sort of power that the whale could not overcome: "I grin at thee, thou grinning whale!" (Melville 425)

2. Baby Sign Language and Pidgin Signed English. BSL has looser hand movements, fewer signs, and allows room for error since children do not have fully developed motor skills and cannot always fully form standard ASL signs. PSE is an intermediate between ASL and spoken English: it follows the grammatical

structure of spoken English but uses signs from standard ASL ("American Sign Language Dictionary").

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Silent Differences in English that Divide American and British Spelling

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Does one go to the *theater* or does one go to the *theatre*? Are one's eyes the *color* blue or the *colour* blue? The answer to both of these questions will differ depending on where they are asked. In England, the answers will most likely appear as *theatre* and *colour* respectively. However, in America, the opposite answers will be given, but only if the questions are in written format. If these questions were posed verbally, the answers would appear the same and no difference could be discerned. Therefore, why is one considered correct and one considered incorrect if they are phonetically equivalent, and why do such differences exist? The answers to these questions are rooted in the history of the language itself. Whether it is the French influence or the American Revolution, British and American English are products of their history and culture. The evolution of phonetically equivalent word endings in British and American English reflects political situations, language shifts, and foreign influences while evoking historical pride on both sides, which has led to a division among modern scholars in regards to the global standardization of spelling, a debate where the cultural significance of these seemingly small differences must considered.

The move towards standardization of spelling for word endings can be seen in the seventeenth century. The fluidity of spelling was still prevalent as shown by early Shakespeare folio publications. The first three folios, which spanned the years 1623-1666, used the endings *–our* and *–or* interchangeably in words such as *honor (honour)* or *color (colour)*. However, the fourth folio, published in 1685, unified the spelling with the use of only the *–our* ending (Mencken 380). The solidification of this and similar British spellings came in the next century with the emergence of Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language*. With its publication in 1755, Johnson created the British standard of spelling. He cleared up the confusion that centered around the *–or* and *–our* spellings by listing the *–our* spellings only. The *–or* ending finds

its roots in Latin, and with the strong French influence on the English language at this time, the *–our* ending took precedence. H. L. Mencken, an American scholar known for his study of the English language, observed that this ending was disagreed on by many scholars at the time and Johnson is considered responsible for setting the standard for this specific word ending (379). Johnson's adoption of the *–our* ending extended to Latin words that had remained untouched by French influence such as the word *color*, which is listed in his dictionary as *colour* (Johnson 409). The previous form of this word was of Latin origin: *color*. Therefore, this new dictionary seemed to strive for a unified spelling system with a strong French influence rather than a strong Latin influence. Johnson's dictionary also addresses the *–er* and *–re* confusion by adopting the *–re* in words such as *centre* and *theatre* (Johnson 348, 2042). This adaptation also reveals the strong French influence on the spelling of the time because both are French spellings that deviate from the Latin *–um* ending. In the history of English, this publication marked a literary move towards unification. However, it was not long after this standard was put into place that there arose opposition to these spellings which seemed to be set in stone.

After Johnson's solidification of such endings as *–our* and *–re* in 1755, the next evolution of these spellings came later in the eighteenth century as the British found themselves at war with the American colonies. With the rise of the American Revolution, there arose a want among Americans to differentiate themselves from their British adversaries. From these sentiments sprang the idea of establishing a regulated form of American English. This idea emerged even before the end of the American Revolution and was voiced most notably by John Adams. In his letter to Congress in 1780, a year before the British surrendered to George Washington, Adams conveyed the responsibility of an independent government to concern itself with regulating language: "The admirable models… by those two ancient towns, Athens and Rome, would be sufficient without any other argument, to shew the United States the importance to their liberty, prosperity and glory of an early attention to the subject of eloquence and language" (Adams). Adams believed that if America was to truly establish itself as a great nation, attention needed to be given to the national language. He seemed to believe that the American people needed to differentiate themselves from their British counterparts through language,

following in the steps of the Athenians and Romans. He continues to say that not only would it be beneficial for the solidification of their new nation, it would also "have an happy effect upon the Union of the States, to have a public standard for all persons in every part of the continent to appeal to, both for the signification and pronunciation of the language" (Adams). Unfortunately, Adams' letter prompted no action in Congress (Crystal 421). However, with Adams' high position in revolutionary affairs and government, his mention of standard signification in this letter marks the beginning of America's deviation from British spelling because it brought the issue before the newly formed government, laying the foundation for the changes that were to come.

Adams' charge for spelling reform went unanswered for almost a decade until writings began to emerge from a man who mirrored his sentiments about American spelling, namely Noah Webster. Webster carried out the spelling unification efforts that Adams mentioned to Congress in the years following the establishment of the United States as an independent nation. His efforts began in 1789 with the publication of his essay *Dissertations on the English Language*, which claims that the British had failed in their attempts to improve or regulate spelling in such areas as the inclusion of silent letters: "The question now occurs; ought the Americans to retain these faults, which produce innumerable inconveniences in the acquisition and use of the language, or ought they at once to reform these abuses, and introduce order and regularity into the orthography of the American tongue?" (Webster 85). This was an open challenge for Americans to succeed where the British had failed with language evolution and standardization. His undertaking of this challenge resulted in the production of *A Compendious Dictionary of the English Language* in 1806 and *An American Dictionary of the English Language* in 1828. The latter of the two works "made Webster a household name in the USA, and it rapidly became the authority in matters of spelling, pronunciation, meaning, and usage" (Crystal 420). This dictionary was Webster's attempt at improving and regulating English spelling, an area in which he felt the British had failed. After the publication of an abridged version of his dictionary, one of Webster's editors composed and released his own English dictionary: Joseph Worcester's *A Comprehensive Pronouncing and Explanatory Dictionary of the English Language.* In 1841, a new edition of Webster's dictionary

was released, followed by a new edition of Worcester's dictionary in 1846. The competition between the two dictionaries presented more than simply a battle between two rivals. Webster's dictionary enforced the American spellings in an attempt to deviate from the British spelling system while Worcester's dictionary sought to carry on the traditional system, making the rivaling publications a battle between American and British spelling (Crystal 82). Worcester released his final attempt at establishing his spelling system in 1860: *A Dictionary of the English Language*. However, Worcester's release was eclipsed four years later by the publication of Webster's new edition and its quick adoption by the US Government Printing Office (Crystal 82). Even though Webster died twenty-one years before the 1864 edition's publication, it cemented Webster's spelling system in America.

Webster's changes in the spelling of words with no phonetic alterations turned out to be regressive rather than progressive because they went back to the earlier Latin forms. Webster's *An American Dictionary of the English Language* eliminated the *–our* ending in words such as *colour* and *honour*. This dictionary also adopted the *–er* ending in words such as *centre*. With the listing of *color* and *honor*, Webster's dictionary marked a regression to Latin spelling, which likewise utilized the *–or* ending. While the changes had no effect on the pronunciation, and change for the sake of simplicity could have been the main reason, anxieties of the time could also have prompted this spelling change. John Adams voiced such anxieties about the English language in his letter to Congress:

> In the last century, Latin was the universal Language of Europe. Correspondence among the learned… was generally carried on in that dead language. In the present century, Latin has been generally laid aside, and French has been substituted in its place; but has not yet become universally established, and according to present appearances, it is not probable that it will. English is destined to be in the next in succeeding centuries, more generally the language of the world, than Latin was in the last, or French is in the present age. (Adams)

He addressed both the prominence of the French language at the time and the possibility, while small, of French following in the

steps of Latin to become a universal language. The elimination of such endings as *–our*, which finds its roots in the French spelling system, eliminates a small part of French influence on the language. This change could have been Webster's small way of assuring that French did not reach the standard of a universal language. Adams also mentions a possible explanation for the regression to Latin spellings by stating that Latin was the language "among the learned." As such, these spellings can be viewed as adding classic sophistication to the American spelling system without the threat of the borrowed spelling's origin language (Latin) regaining prominence over English. However, changes that would have affected the pronunciation were simply eliminated and replaced with new non-Latin forms to retain phonetic continuity. This was the case for the *–re* ending, which was exchanged for the *–er* ending in Webster's dictionary. In his dictionary, *centre* became *center* and *theatre* became *theater*. Reverting back to the Latin roots of such words would have required the use of the *–um* ending, which would have changed the pronunciation of these words. *Centre* would have become *centrum* and *theatre* would have become *theatrum*, which would have caused a major change in pronunciation. Therefore, the French spelling was traded for a new American form in order to avoid drastic change.

Such changes in spelling became rooted in American spelling thanks to Webster's efforts, while these changes were met with opposition in England, where Johnson's dictionary still provided the basis for spelling. Webster's publications faced ridicule across the pond: "It was fiercely attacked in Britain for its Americanism, but it gave US English an identity and status comparable to that given to the British English lexicon by Dr. Johnson" (Crystal 420). H. W. Fowler, an English lexicographer, provides an insight into the British spelling a century after the publication of Webster's *American Dictionary*. His book, *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage,* was published in 1926 and revealed the British adherence to Johnson's spelling system while acknowledging American changes. Fowler's dictionary ignores some American changes such as the change from the *–re* ending to the *–er* ending as seen in his listing of the word *center* in its British form: *centre* (Fowler 83). However, his treatment of the *–our* change to *–or* is different. In fact, this ending gets its own entry in the dictionary and is listed as "*–our* and *–or*" (Fowler 428). In this entry, he voices his distaste for this American spelling

change: "The American abolition of *–our* in such words as *honour* and *favour* has probably retarded rather than quickened English progress in the same direction…. we wisely decline to regard it as a matter for argument. The English way cannot but be better than the American way; that is enough" (Fowler 428). Fowler embodies the British distaste for Americanisms and American spelling, which has been carried into modern-day British sentiments. He regards the American changes as inhibitors to the progress of English and also denounces them as simply improper. However, Fowler notes the effects that American spelling has had on British spelling by noting the elimination of the *–u* in *governour* during his time while acknowledging the simplicity and unification that this change allows. He concludes the section by seemingly admitting defeat in his efforts to retain this spelling and predicts this change will eliminate the *–our* ending: "It is not worth while either to resist such a gradual change or to fly in the face of national sentiment by trying to hurry it…" (Fowler 428). In this quote, he also claims that there is a piece of identify within such language devices and to change these devices is a blow to "national sentiment." This speaks to the importance of such changes in language. In the same way that John Adams knew the vital role that written language would play in setting America apart, Fowler recognizes the cultural importance of language and the role it plays in a nation's identity. However, he also recognizes that the English language has been evolving since its development. While admitting that change is what the future holds, Fowler also conveys why these changes should be noted and not forgotten. While these endings may have no effect on the sound of the language, they are still part of the history that has shaped them.

The diminishing boundaries between British and American spelling to which Fowler alluded continued to fade due to the rise of American culture. Harvey Feigenbaum, a political science professor involved in research on the globalization of culture, observed that America now reigns supreme in its control over pop culture with extensive influence and dissemination throughout other countries, which has prompted the fear of Americanization among other cultures (107). The fear of Americanization, combined with the historical significance found in the spelling system, drives British English's resistance to American spelling adaptations in the present day. Robert Ilson, Associate Director of English Usage at University

College London, states that the spelling differences between the two standards rarely affect pronunciation while also recognizing that "they serve as emblems or shibboleths of linguistic nationalism" (42). Spelling systems can be a source of national pride as well as a signature on cultural pieces. Identifying the origin of a piece of literature can be as simple as looking at the spelling used within the work. However, Ilson observes, "It was once common to change the spelling of American books published in Britain, but in recent years the practice has been less common. This may mean that British linguistic nationalism is waning…" (42). This observation could be interpreted as evidence that the cultural ties between the British and their spelling are weakening. Conversely, this can also be seen as a growing tolerance for the American spelling system among the British people. If this is true, then the two systems should be allowed to coexist in peace, which will allow each culture to retain its signature differences. However, the existence of the two spelling systems proves to be problematic in the world of global business dealings. Uniformity and standardization are essential in the realm of business because anything that deviates from the "professional" standard could inhibit business transactions with the appearance of inferiority or simply unprofessionalism. Professional writings and correspondences that are exchanged globally have to incorporate a spelling system with the choice of either the system of the writer or the system of the recipient. The problem is that people have very strong reactions towards a spelling system that deviates from their own. Therefore, a flawed attempt to adopt the spelling system of another in order to maintain a good business relationship can either be viewed as an effort to please the recipient, or it can be understood as mockingly insincere (Scott 162). While unifying the spelling systems would be a cultural loss, it would benefit global business. However, unification in the direction of American spelling does not seem likely within the near future due to current opposition. Ilson claims, "A spelling used in Britain is more likely to be acceptable in America than is an American spelling in Britain" (44). British opposition to the Americanization of spelling as voiced by Fowler remains ever-present. While American spelling was developed on the principle of deviating from tradition, British spelling has remained dedicated to the preservation of a system that predates the American standard, making it a harder system to change.

The historical significance of spelling differences among phonetically identical word endings needs to be taken into consideration in order to comprehend the significance of seemingly simple changes in written English. The unification of British spelling has roots in the works of Shakespeare while the American spelling system was developed during the country's Revolution as a product of the American independent spirit. The history of these spelling differences is integral in order to decide the path of language. The route of change or adaptation should not be pursued without the knowledge of why these differences exist. In modern times, there are benefits to the adaptation of American English spellings, such as easier business communication. English is also considered to be a living language. Therefore, change and evolution seem to be inevitable. However, evolution and assimilation are not the same. There are consequences and dangers to be considered when dealing with cultural assimilation. Feigenbaum observes, "As foreigners adopt American ways of thinking, American styles of politics are not far behind. To the extent that American categories replace indigenous ones, people lose a sense of their options and their histories" (129). Simply adapting to the American spelling system would be considered a loss in British society. This assimilation that has been titled Americanization presents a threat to the cultural identity of British populaces. There are pros and cons to both maintaining two spelling systems and adapting to a unified, yet highly Americanized, spelling system. The important thing to realize is that these spellings, both American and British, have political roots in the history of their countries, and losing them would be equivalent to erasing the effects of a country's history on its language.

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How Soon is "Too Soon?" Placing Tragedy on a Timeline Before Subjecting it to Humor

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"We're Not Aiming For The Truck" is a YouTube video that begins with the triumphant moment from the movie *Toy Story*: Buzz Lightyear and Woody are soaring toward the moving truck at the end of the film, but they fly over it. When they do, Woody says, "Uh, Buzz. We missed the truck," to which Buzz replies, "We're not aiming for the truck." In the movie, Buzz and Woody aim and fall gently beside their owner/companion, Andy, but the creator of the YouTube instead has this moment cut to a video of the World Trade Center being hit by the second plane on September 11th, 2001.

According to Simon Critchley's *On Humour*, there are three primary theories regarding humor and why humans laugh at things—the superiority theory, relief theory, and incongruity theory. Along with these theories, Critchley also claims that jokes function by "returning the listener home," which could be culturally and/or geographically. In addition to these theories, Freud claims that humor also stems from the repression of one's unconscious feelings and desires, otherwise known as one's id, and when these feelings surface they cause laughter. Despite "We're Not Aiming For The Truck" containing elements that would fall under each of these categories, and the video returning many viewers to their childhood with *Toy Story*, the video still fails to get the number of laughs one would expect if looking at things strictly from an objective, humor-theorist mindset. In fact, many laughs sparked by this video stem from nervous laughter instead of the aforementioned theories—laconic laughter as opposed to bodily gaiety that fails to show itself due to either one's fears of tarnishing one's societal perception or by one taking too much offense from the actions occurring in the video. "We're Not Aiming For The Truck" struggles to make many viewers laugh because the stacking

of the three primary humor theories creates mixed emotions. The "return home" that's necessary becomes a destruction of home via the corruption of one's childhood in the tarnishing of *Toy Story*, as well as the fact that many viewers were too strongly affected by the events on 9/11 for enough time to have passed to begin subjecting it to humor.

Many comedians define humor and comedy as tragedy in addition to time, thus the creation of the "too soon" comments following crude jokes. If this definition is true, comedians must balance and predict the amount of time they must wait before subjecting tragedy to humor so that they do not offend their viewers, but they cannot wait too long because the subject will have either already been used or no longer be current or relevant. The problem arises in that each person deals with tragedy differently; therefore, each person will get over particular tragedies at different times. For instance, some people get over the loss of a loved one very quickly, whereas other people might take years to get over the same type of loss, and larger-scaled tragedies often take longer amounts of time to overcome as well. Therefore, because "We're Not Aiming For The Truck" targets a primarily American audience, the trauma induced by the 9/11 terrorist attacks is too great for many viewers to laugh at the video. One might think that if the video were shown to an audience of a different nationality, that group might laugh more because they are less affected by the tragedy. However, that connection is the same reason why the humor works for some American viewers. Although tragic, the reference to the terrorist attacks also serves as a return home.

Humor works alongside the uncanny so that a joke can return the viewer/listener to common thought, or "home," while also changing the situation. Chapman and Foot describe this sensation in their collective work *Humor and Laughter* by writing, "Content plays a dual role. Primarily the material should be familiar. The cognitive state of the audience can, however, be manipulated" (Chapman and Foot xii), where the manipulation is the audience's displacement then return to a place of origin, albeit with a new perspective. "Aiming" returns the viewer home in two ways: the return to childhood via *Toy Story* and the return to being an American citizen with the inclusion of the 9/11 attacks. Although both returns could prompt happy responses, both returns are also tarnished in "Aiming" by its unhappy ending. *Toy Story* was

a major part of many American kids' lives—it has achieved the typically elusive 100% positive rating on *RottenTomatoes.com*—and "Aiming" begins its clip with the scene that normally marks Buzz and Woody's triumphant returns to their owner, Andy. Therefore, to anyone familiar with the movie, "Aiming" returns the viewer directly into childish elation by causing the viewer to believe they will soon see a pleasant, heartwarming moment. Instead, "Aiming" changes the situation and returns the viewer to another period—that traumatic aftermath following the attacks on the United States' World Trade Center buildings. Therefore, the return home suddenly becomes solemn and angry, thus negating the incongruous nature of "Aiming" that would typically instigate laughter.

Incongruity is one of the three primary theories that Critchley includes in *On Humour* and states that humor "is produced by the experience of a felt incongruity between what we know or expect to be the case, and what actually takes place in the joke" (Critchley 3). William Hazlitt discusses this theory in greater detail with reference to differing body reactions in his *Lectures On The English Comic Writers* in which he states: "Man is the only animal that laughs and weeps; for he is the only animal that is struck with the difference between what things are, and what they ought to be" (Hazlitt 1). Therefore, one can deduce that the reason some jokes fail to work is that they are too predictable. That being said, the sudden transformation of Buzz and Woody into the second plane hitting the World Trade Center instigates more gasps than laughs, which implies that the viewer must also be comfortable with the change taking place. This is not to say that jokes cannot be funny if they make someone uncomfortable, rather the recipientviewer/listener of a joke must be willing to accept the projected change in order to experience true laughter. The crux of the "Aiming" video's joke, as with the rest of the "too soon" genre, resides in the fact the video simultaneously probes for the two opposing, while both instinctual, reactions Hazlitt writes of—laughter and weeping. Again, this is not to say that the change, or surprise, must be positive. One of the other theories that Critchley highlights in his text is the superiority theory—an ideology that explores why people laugh at other people when something negative happens to them.

The superiority theory's title explains itself: "We laugh from feelings of superiority over other people" (Critchley 2). This can be related to when one laughs at another person falling down or

similar mishaps. Essentially, this video shows the misgivings of many people even though the multiple instances of superiority do not stack on one another to make viewers laugh more. Rather, humans are apt to laugh less at the misfortunes of multiple people at one time than the single misfortune of one, although still in reference to how severe the actual misgiving is. Also, the "other" in that definition is extremely important. For instance, a person is more likely to laugh at someone of a different ethnicity or socioeconomic class than that in which they reside because there is a distinction between the two subjects. If the person experiencing a misgiving is too similar to the viewer, the viewer feels too strong of a connection and does not laugh because it would be similar to laughing at one's own self. Therefore, part of the problem with "Aiming" arises in that a lot of Americans, the video's primary audience, were hurt during the World Trade Center attacks, which allows one to infer that many viewers will feel too associated with the victims in this video, thus excluding them from the superior group even though they were not physically harmed personally.

Because the viewers of "Aiming" were not personally harmed, one could assume the laughter that stems from the video applies to the relief theory. Critchley explains the relief theory as being "a release of pent-up nervous energy…where the energy that is relieved and discharged in laughter provides pleasure" (Critchley 3). On a first glance, one could easily decide that the relief one feels while watching "Aiming" stems from the fact they were able to survive the terror attacks without any physical ailments. However, the relief goes much deeper. Not only is one thankful that they were able to come out of 9/11 physically unscathed, but the viewer also finds relief that they are still affected by the terror attacks. Social media tends to have a numbing effect on tragedy by supplying mass quantities of traumatic events in small periods of time. They become repetitive, which causes many people to brush off the posts each year telling us to "Never Forget" the 9/11 attacks. Therefore, this video serves as a reminder of how unexpected the attacks actually were. By beginning with *Toy Story*, the video puts many of its viewers back in the same mindset they were in when the attacks first took place. This allows the attack to carry a similar effect as it initially had, because it was such a sudden burst from childhood innocence into experience. Therefore, the relieving laughter a viewer may experience from watching "Aiming" actu-

ally derives from nervously being thankful that they can still be emotionally impacted by something that is becoming increasingly distant through social media and the passage of time.

As described, "We're Not Aiming For The Truck" applies to all three of humor's primary theories, but the theories do not stack to make the viewer laugh raucously. Instead, the stacking of the three theories actually makes the situation worse. Not only do the stacking of theories confuse the situation, the combination of the three theories in "Aiming" also becomes muddling because each individual theory has conflicting interests with the video's primary audience. As a result, the theories are actually working against humor in the eyes of Americans because an American viewer always becomes the "other" in the theories rather than an insider. Despite that feeling of otherness, there are still groups that laugh together at the video, which ties back to the relief theory. While the viewer has been becoming increasingly numb to the 9/11 attacks, the repression of those emotions has caused them to build up. "Aiming" serves as a method of release for these feelings, which places the viewers back in a group of insiders—a group that can all relate by being pleased the 9/11 attacks still have the ability to make them mourn.

Freud claims that people laugh at unexpected things because it becomes "a sudden release of intellectual tension" (207). The "release of intellectual tension" to which Freud refers can be related to the viewers' pleasant realization that they have not become completely numb to one of their nation's most horrific tragedies—thus coinciding with the relief theory. Although the relief originally may have originally stemmed from the fact that the viewer was not personally harmed during the terrorist's attacks, this relief changes over time because of the repression of fear that the attacks initially created. Now, the viewer feels relieved by the fact that they are still able to mourn over something that happened nearly fifteen years prior, despite the media's numbing effect.The video then becomes a mechanism designed to release this pent-up tension and serves as a catalyst of relief for the viewers. However, not all viewers are able to laugh still. The viewers that are unable to laugh have simply repressed the grief of 9/11 so deeply that they cannot release it after watching one simple video, while other people's grievances are closer to the surface, thus allowing them to laugh. The differing depths of repression creates two more groups that can differentiate

themselves—those that can laugh and release their feelings and those that cannot—along with the group that cannot laugh due to the media's numbing effects.

For humor to function, there must be groups with differentiation. Humor is a local event that necessitates communal understanding. Americans laugh at Germans because they are different, Caucasian Americans laugh at African Americans because they are different, white-collar, Caucasian Americans laugh at blue-collar, Caucasian Americans, etcetera. By creating Americans as the "other" in each individual theory, "Aiming" actually creates communities of "others" that then form subsets. One group of individuals could feel superior over the viewers that laugh because they could view those viewers as being inhumane or heartless. On the opposite end of the spectrum, viewers that laugh at the video can feel superior because they realize they are still able to feel empathy over an event that happened fifteen years ago—despite the subject matter of the video changing from happy to sad, the situation of the viewer actually changes from being disappointedly numb to trauma to oxymoronic glee that they are still able to feel remorse. Therefore, both groups are able to experience the intellectual release, and, through this release, each group also experiences laughter. By creating a scenario in which multiple groups of outsiders can be formed, "Aiming" allows each group to feel like the insider group by simply labeling the other group as the true outsider—the same reason any two demographics are able to have jokes about the other. The system of "othering" is irrelevant so long as there are multiple groups available.

A final notion for "We're Not Aiming For The Truck" can be found within Andre Breton's definitions of dark humor. Breton claims dark humor is the "mortal enemy of sentimentality" and a "superior revolt of the mind" in his *Anthology of Black Humor*. Rather than one laughing at the pleasant unexpectedness at something, Breton claims that one can also laugh at something more macabre. Breton believes that laughter often comes from the "hyper-moral superego" which constantly checks one's morals. Therefore, when someone laughs at something particularly dark, this laughter derives from deeper within the viewer—the id. Coincidentally, the laughter stemming from relief is similar to the laughter coming from one's id, because both have to do with repressed feelings and one's unconscious. In both scenarios, a viewer of "Aiming" is

neither consciously aware of the repressed fear nor the desires of their id. Therefore, whether a viewer laughs because they happily realize they are still affected by the terrorist attacks, or the laughter stems from the id, both are forms of laughter stemming from relief. In addition, Breton also believes that dark humor can be more intellectual, furthering the grouping that "Aiming" causes. A new group can form because dark-humored intellectuals can revel in the notion that they are intellectually superior to other viewers.

"We're Not Aiming For The Truck" serves for interesting humor analysis because it applies to each of humor's primary theories while still failing to attain a multiplicity of laughs from wide audiences. Instead of the superiority theory, incongruity theory, and relief theories stacking onto one another to make an incredibly funny video, the combination of theories actually muddle what is transpiring. The three theories occurring simultaneously stretch the viewer's brain in uncomfortable ways and does not allow it to focus on any one thing. If any laughter stems directly from one of these theories, it can most easily be attributed to the relief theory. However, the relief does not stem directly from the video, rather what the video makes the viewer realize after a few minutes of reflection. Instead, the humor in this video functions because the video succeeds in making each viewer feel like an outsider. "Aiming" returns the viewer's home to obliterate their childhoods in a swift transformation of Buzz and Woody into the second plane hitting the twin towers, forcing the viewers to form new homes for themselves. This mass "othering" creates a large group that then forms subset groups that can choose to either make fun of themselves in raillery, or form strict differentiations between other groups. These differentiations form smaller, more specific groups over which one can feel superior. While feeling superior, the viewer also experiences relief at the realization of how they had become relatively numb to a trauma that had once overtaken their nation. Breton's idea of dark humor works with this text, but it also faces complications because one cannot control the release of one's id. "We're Not Aiming For The Truck" intentionally others everyone in its audience so that the only laughter a viewer can experience on any given day is that of relief—not that they were unharmed by the attacks, but rather because the viewer finds relief in nervously realizing that they had become so numb to the event through its oversaturation in modern media that it took something as drastic

as their childhood heroes performing the most egregious terrorist attack of the viewer's lifetime to bring them back to reality and feel remorse over of what occurred on September 11th, 2001.

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The "Abhorred Monster": How Shelley Uses and Misuses Disability in *Frankenstein*

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> "Never did I behold a vision so horrible as his face, of such loathsome yet appalling hideousness."
>
> —Victor Frankenstein

INTRODUCTION

The human form is in no way generic. The phenotypic variability of human beings is both a "fundamental" and "an inescapable element of human existence" (Couser 602). Even so, throughout history, humans have been divided and categorized by their differences. Race, ethnicity, gender, age, and disability have all "been called upon or invented as a tool of citizenship and exclusion or to express and give credibility to social, religious, and ethnic differences" (Turner and Stagg 1). Historically, many societies viewed disability as "an absolute, inferior state," "personal misfortune," or "an index of morality" (Bérubé 569, Thompson 6). This persistent other-ing of disabled persons has and still continues to permeate social, political, and economic spheres today. Literature in particular often presents these biases in illustrations of specific persons or cultures, which, in turn, have born modern criticisms of these uses and misuses.

While feminist criticism, gender/queer studies, and critical race theory have been operating in the literary world since the 1970s, a relatively new field of literary criticism, Disability Studies, has recently taken center stage in evaluating literature. According to disability studies scholar Leonard Cassuto, the study of disability is a "form of cultural studies in itself," and one which uniquely sets itself apart from racial or gender studies. What makes disability so compelling to investigate is that, unlike race, ethnicity, or gender, "disability is a minority group that anyone can join" (Cassuto 220). Moreover, the disabled community itself doesn't have a strict defini-

tion of disability, as its boundaries range from people with Downs Syndrome to amputees, which makes the "'disabled identity'…an ambiguous, unstable term in ways that "Latino/a" is not" (Cassuto 219). So then, how does one study something so fluid and broad as disability? Most able-bodied scholars conclude that since there is no official disability studies "canon" to follow, the best response is to view the world as one's canon, using the humanities as a means "to educe and analyze the meaning of disability from the point of view of the able-bodied" (Cassuto 220). By looking at popular literature, scholars are beginning to understand that "Western Culture has persistently, even obsessively, deployed disability as a prompt and as a prop for narrative…[from] Sophocles' Oedipus though Shakespeare's Richard III and Melville's Ahab" (Couser 603). Thus, this scope of misrepresentation dates back before modern literature, extending to tropes used throughout most of storytelling history.

This essay engages with one of literature's most beloved tales of horror, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, as a modern critical study of disability. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818)—though a striking and beautifully written tale of horror—consistently employs disability as a means to highlight its antagonist's monstrosity. This paper evaluates the ways in which Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* illuminates three key points raised by modern disability studies scholars in its use of disability: the portrayal of the dichotomy of staring, the performance of difference, and the relationship between disabled and able-bodied narratives within the text. Additionally, this essay concludes by presenting to the reader the moral implications of using disability as a means to convey monstrosity in literature and modern media today.

II. STARING

Throughout *Frankenstein*, the nameless creature's grotesque physique excommunicates him from the rest of humankind, forcing him into society's margins as a bitter observer. However, the creature's misfortunes, which all inevitably occur after he is seen by an able-bodied person, unknowingly connote a unique balance of power that many members of the disabled community experience. In Rosemarie Garland Thompson's book, *Staring: How We Look*, Thompson analyzes the relationship between the able-bodied and the disabled through the interaction of staring:

> The fact that there was no accepted word for the person being stared at shows how the thinking about staring (including the immense body of scholarship centered on "the gaze") has focused exclusively on the person doing the staring rather than the person being stared at [….] The previous lack of a term for the "staree" also suggests the passivity that we have attributed to the person being stared at…the staree has always been a partner in the staring interaction, a partner whose considerable power to affect that interaction has been overlooked. (qtd. in Cassuto 222)

Thompson's argument that the "staree" holds more autonomy in the social interaction of staring is especially true within the context of *Frankenstein*. Popular assumption would dictate that the starer—in this case, Dr. Frankenstein—would hold the power in the staring interaction with the "staree"— his creation. Certainly, arguments surrounding "the gaze," such as Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," emphasize the power that the starer holds. Mulvey stresses: "[…] voyeurism[…]has associations with sadism: pleasure lies in ascertaining guilt[…] [and] asserting control [over the guilty person]" (840). Indeed, the story of *Frankenstein* itself is about asserting control, control over life and death. Mulvey also writes that in order to "circumvent" the threat of the "staree," often times narratives induce "voyeuristic or fetishistic mechanisms" in order to maintain the power of the one who holds "the gaze," the starer (843). Repeatedly, the object of the starer's attention is a cultural other, and therefore, is held not only captive by the starer's gaze, but also by society's judgment.

However, *Frankenstein* inverts these common interpretations behind the power structure of "the gaze," instead illustrating the subject of the gaze, the "staree," holding the power. For instance, when Dr. Frankenstein and his creature observe one another from afar, it is the creature's gaze that renders Dr. Frankenstein powerless: "I stood fixed, gazing intently[…] its [the creature's] gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect, more hideous than belongs to humanity[…]my teeth chattered, and I was forced to lean against a tree for support" (Shelley 63). Just as Thompson suggests in *Staring: How We Look*, the subject of the starer's attention—in this case, the creature—can hold significant power, because staring is not merely a one-way act. For "although the monster in Shelley's novel is hid-

eous to look at, Frankenstein himself feels more keenly the horror of the creature looking at him" (Mossman). Thus, the creature's disability in *Frankenstein* actually reverses long-established arguments surrounding the gaze, highlighting instead the complicated dichotomy of staring, and the power that both the starer and the "staree" can wield over one another.

Furthermore, deconstructing the power behind the stare in *Frankenstein*, the staring interactions not only dramatize the relationship between creator and creation, but also reveal Dr. Frankenstein's fear of losing his own agency. According to scholar Mark Mossman, in *Frankenstein*, the creature's monstrosity does not stem from his later violent acts, but rather, the moment he begins to show capability: "It is when the creature…articulates an ability, and worst of all when it looks back at the observer, that it becomes a monster" (Mossman). More than anything, the terror that Dr. Frankenstein feels from the gaze of the creature is his horror at the creature's agency. While Dr. Frankenstein dreads being "captured in the gaze of the other," the possibility of losing his control over his creation, of losing control as the starer in a staring interaction, is what alters his feelings from pride into "horror and hatred" (Salotto 195; Shelley 136). Therefore, the dichotomy between the starer and the "staree" in *Frankenstein* not only to inverts common scholarly assumptions about the gaze, but also to connotes the changing landscape of power and agency between the disabled and able-bodied characters of the story.

III. THE PERFORMANCE OF DIFFERENCE

The connection between starer and "staree" is not the only way that *Frankenstein* employs disability throughout its narrative. Through its antagonist, *Frankenstein* illustrates the performance of difference on both the mental and the physical level. In "A Space, a Place: Visions of a Disabled Community in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and The Last Man," Paul Marchbanks argues the significance of the creature's performance of physical and mental difference during his birth scene. Marchbanks claims that during this sequence, Shelley's depiction of the creature reveals a deep-rooted cultural fear of mental disability. When Dr. Frankenstein brings his creation to life, the nameless creature is illustrated with "jaws opened" as he "muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks" (Shelley 44). Marchbanks asserts that this description plays

upon cultural aversions to mental disability: "The creature's early tendency to perceive and yet not (initially) differentiate amongst the data gathered by his five sense recalls the limitations of an individual with a severe intellectual disability" (26). More specifically, "the creature's 'convulsive motion' brings to mind the species of seizure that often plagues [developmentally disabled persons]," while his "yellow and watery eyes" match 19th-century medical descriptions of persons with intellectual disabilities (25).

However, Marchbanks does note in his argument that the creature breaks free from specific disability stereotypes via his rapid mental growth, the capacity of which challenged the popular notion that appearance was linked with cognitive ability (26). In *Frankenstein*, the creature learns speech and language from observing a family from afar. At first, the creature describes, "By great application…I learned and applied the words, 'fire,' 'milk,' 'bread,' and 'wood'" (Shelley 100). However, as time progresses, so too do the creature's mental faculties: "I eagerly seized…Paradise Lost, a volume of Plutarch's Lives, and the Sorrows of Winter. The possession of these treasures gave me extreme delight; I now continually studied and exercised my mind upon these histories (Shelley 116). In this sense, *Frankenstein's* creature becomes even more of a terrifying spectacle, as the creature both fits into, and then promptly breaks out of cultural stereotypes surrounding the intelligence of disabled persons.

Furthermore, *Frankenstein* also illustrates the performance of difference through the physical body of its antagonist, as the body of the creature itself plays upon two specific themes: "an over concern with death" and an "ascription of infrahuman life" (Livneh 282). During the construction of his infamous experiment, Dr. Frankenstein relates: "His limbs were in proportion…Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath…his watery eyes, that seemed almost the same color as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shriveled complexion and straight black lips" (Shelley 43). According to Disability Studies scholar Hanoch Livneh, this illustration of the creature's body does more than just frighten the reader. Livneh asserts that one of the reasons that Frankenstein's creature, as well as other popular tales of monsters, are so terrifying are because they incite the human fear of death: "Frankenstein's monster is assembled from dead body parts; Dracula is the undead… and the Mummy is, of

course, a dead king…they all imply death" (Livneh 281). So then, Shelley's creature not only embodies cultural fears about mental and physical disability, but also mirrors a widespread human fear of death and decay.

Additionally, the creature's cadaverous appearance is not the only way in which *Frankenstein* plays upon the performance of difference. Livneh also suggests that the "ascription of infrahuman life" to disabled persons occurs when one who has features such as "animal-like skin, excessive facial hair," or "contorted facial and bodily features," appears within a narrative (Livneh 282). That is to say that disabled figures in literature are often described with animalistic imagery because their features challenge common cultural definitions of human normalcy, existing in a cultural borderland between the human and the inhuman. This "ascription of infrahuman life" in *Frankenstein* is nearly always found in Dr. Frankenstein's able-bodied narrative. For example, when Dr. Frankenstein appears at the magistrate to profess his intention to hunt down the creature, he proclaims: "Who can follow an animal which can traverse the sea of ice and inhabit caves and dens where no man would venture to intrude? …he may be hunted like the chamois and destroyed as a beast of prey" (Shelley 190). These types of animalistic, "infrahuman" descriptions work to further separate the disabled subject from the able-bodied one, ultimately emphasizing the disabled person's "absolute, inferior state" to the able-bodied, and in *Frankenstein's* case, further demonizing the creature (Thomson 6). Disability, in this sense, is therefore animalized, further highlighting the social and cultural lines between what is considered human and what is not.

However, what makes *Frankenstein* so dynamic a text for a Disability Studies analysis is that its creature's performance of physical and mental difference traverses both the territories of disability and hyper-ability. Michael Bérubé suggests that "this linkage of exceptionality with disability may sound strange" but is nevertheless "simply a reversal of the more familiar narrative dynamic in which disability is rendered as exceptionality and thereby redeemed" (569). In *Frankenstein*, however, the narrative of a disability being redeemed by an exceptionality is not present; rather, the creature is deemed even more horrifying due to his superhuman abilities. Although in the creature's beginning he mirrors 19th-century depictions of intellectual and physical disability, the creature

ultimately grows to cultivate considerable intellect. What's more, the creature learns to yield his physical strength to the point of superhuman ability. As Dr. Frankenstein encounters the creature on the heights of a snowy mountain, he describes the creature's unnerving capabilities: "[The creature was] advancing towards me with superhuman speed. He bounded over the crevices in the ice, which I had walked with caution; his stature, also…seemed to exceed that of man" (Shelley 85).

Moreover, in terms of cognitive ability, Dr. Frankenstein reiterates throughout the story his creature's sophisticated "powers of eloquence and persuasion," which, were it not for his physical aspect, would render him a sympathetic figure (Shelley 210). Whereas common literary portrayals would dictate that a disabled individual would suffer from physical and intellectual powerlessness, *Frankenstein's* creature is able to transcend these assumptions. Instead, the creature transforms his original impairments into hyper-abilities: "Remember, thou hast made me more powerful than thyself; my height is superior to thine, my joints more supple…Beware, for I am fearless and therefore powerful" (Shelley 87, 158). Ultimately, the creature performs his bodily difference "in ways both sublime and familiar," without ever being redeemed by his exceptionalities (Lacom 549). Thus, *Frankenstein's* creature is made an even more terrifying spectacle, as he defies societal definitions of normalcy by functioning on both ends of the ability spectrum without finding redemption.

IV. ABLE-BODIED AND DISABLED PERSPECTIVES: WHO TELLS THE STORY?

In conjunction with the way that *Frankenstein* illustrates the dichotomy of staring as well as the performance of difference, another aspect of *Frankenstein* that handles, or more precisely mishandles, disability is through its narrative structure. *Frankenstein* is written in epistolary form, its story being told through the medium of letters. Approximately halfway through the story, there is narrative shift that allows for a section in the creature's own words. More than anything, this narrative switch highlights the relationship between the able-bodied and disabled narratives in *Frankenstein*, a binary in which narrative reliability is especially challenged. When recalling the night of his birth, the creature says: "A strange multiplicity of sensations seized me, and I saw, felt, heard, and smelt

at the same time[…]I knew, and could distinguish, nothing[…]I sat down and wept" (Shelley 90-91). The creature's account of his birth scene bares stark contrast to Dr. Frankenstein's. Whereas Dr. Frankenstein reported that same night as dark and "mingled with horror," the creature's narrative allows for the reader to understand the sad reality of Dr. Frankenstein's work (Shelley 44). Moreover, the creature's narrative also allows for the reader to track not only his mental and physical growth, but also his moral progression. After the creature laments being rejected from society, he laments: "I am malicious because I am miserable. Am I not shunned and hated by all mankind?" (Shelley 134). While the creature's narrative broadens the reader's perceptions of the story, there still remains a key problem in *Frankenstein's* shift from the able-bodied to disabled epistolary narrative: there never was a shift.

To reiterate, *Frankenstein* is written in epistolary form. The whole of the story is transcribed in letters from an able-bodied arctic explorer, Walton, to his sister. Therefore, the narrative of the creature does not come directly from the creature himself, but rather, from Dr. Frankenstein to Walton, or from Walton to his sister: Margaret…what a scene has just taken place! I am yet dizzy with the remembrance of it. I hardly know whether I shall have the power to detail it; yet the tale which I have recorded would be incomplete without this final and wonderful catastrophe" (Shelley 208). This epistolary meta-narrativity in *Frankenstein* scatters the reliability of the narrative we are given from the creature, allowing for the possibility that the creature's narrative could at any time have been appropriated by either one or both of the able-bodied narrators of the story: "The tale-within-a-tale structure demonstrates that no one "original" story exists" (Salotto 198). Consequently, the narrative agency that Dr. Frankenstein took in re-telling the creature's story hinders the creature's chances at a genuine human interaction with Walton: "I was at first touched by the expressions of [the creature's] misery; yet, when I called to mind what Frankenstein said of his powers of eloquence and persuasion…my indignation was rekindled" (Shelley 210). Therefore, *Frankenstein's* interpretations of able-bodied and disabled narratives through its epistolary form ultimately work to construct a narrative that consistently denies the disabled character of the story a voice.

In addition, *Frankenstein's* take on able-bodied and disabled narratives are even more important when looking to the scholar-

ship of modern Disability Studies. In Disability Studies' growing body of analysis, many scholars claim that the one piece missing from forming a more comprehensive field of Disability Studies is "work that is written about disabled outsiderness from the inside—that is, by disabled people themselves" (Cassuto 229). While the majority of Disability Studies scholars view literary texts from the perspective of the able-bodied, the integral perspectives needed are the ones from the disabled community: "disability studies needs to bring into alignment what the world sees as the disabled subject and the world through which the disabled subject sees" (Cassuto 228). And although initially *Frankenstein's* section from the creature's perspective seems to offer insight into his disabled otherness, the epistolary meta-narrativity of the story undermines the validity of the creature's perspective. For ultimately, disability scholars conclude: "[I]t is the narrative of disability's very unknowability that consolidates the need to tell a story about it. Thus, in stories about characters with disabilities, an underlying issue is always whether the disability is the foundation of character itself" (Bérubé 570). Thus, without a sound narrative coming from the creature himself, *Frankenstein* fundamentally obscures the voice of its disabled antagonist, making it all the more easy to associate the creature's disability with his moral capacity.

V. WHAT MAKES A MONSTER?

Ultimately, in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Shelley constructs her antagonist through the employment of disability. The creature's initial intellectual and physical impairments, in addition to his eventual transformation into a hyper-abled figure, all are what categorized him as a "wretch," "demoniacal corpse," or "miserable monster," even before he commits any violent offenses (Shelley 44). While, as a whole, *Frankenstein* illuminates key points raised by modern Disability Studies scholars in its use of disability—such as how the story portrays the dichotomy of staring through the creature's powerful gaze, the performance of difference through the creature's physical and mental aptitudes, and the relationship between disabled and able-bodied narratives through the supposed narrative shift—it still begs the question: why? Why are any or all of these components necessary to create such a compelling monster in *Frankenstein*?

The answer, as it turns out, is not so simple. Historically, most human cultures have been known to "scapegoat strangers" in a

strategy that "furnishes communities with a binding identity" of who is "included (us) and who is excluded (them)" (Kearney 26). When one is disabled, this process of division and other-ing is made a relatively easy cultural work. Thus, for centuries, Western culture has used disability both "literally and metaphorically" in order to "establish concept[s] of normalcy and deviance" (Lacom 548). In the case of England during Mary Shelley's lifetime, most disabled persons were managed by freak shows and traveling carnivals: People with disabilities and deformities were displayed next to England's colonized "savages," in carnivals and "freak shows" throughout the country (55-78). Such exhibitions erased the differences among deviant bodies, which, because they were seen to threaten England's national security, were managed by being made spectacle, controlled through ritual containment (Lacom 548). In this exhibition culture, one can readily observe how that cultural practice precipitated the illustration of the creature in *Frankenstein*, a story which uses disability and otherness as both a "prop" and "prompt" for its narrative (Couser 603). Nevertheless, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was first published in 1818, nearly 200 years ago. And while modern society doesn't suffer from the same fears as 19th-century England, disability is still used and misused in literature and modern media today. From *X-men* to *Of Mice and Men*, from *Rain Man* to *The Phantom of the Opera*, disability continues to find its place in the narratives of popular culture, and typically through a negative lens.

Modern literary criticisms of the 1970s have done well to create scholarship that recognizes the ways in which racial, gender, or sexual orientation bias has permeated our culture— yet disability is still largely unchallenged in its representations in literature and media today. Although not all disabled figures in today's literature and media fall under the immediate category of monster, as is the case with *Frankenstein's* creature, more often than not, disabled figures are depicted as antagonists. Therefore, literary scholars see that it "[is] right to point out that literary representations of people with disabilities often serve to mobilize pity or horror in a moral drama that has nothing to do with the actual experience of disability" (Bérubé 570). Thus, the ever-growing field of disability studies hopes to change the widespread epidemic of using disability to (mis)represent character.

As a whole, disability studies does not just critique literature. The ways in which Western culture sees, and conversely, refuses to see,

disability extends to widespread social establishments, something that disability studies hopes to address on all levels: "Disability Studies, by forcing scholarship to confront the embodiment of difference, challenges academia to address its own aporia as well as addressing those of medicine, institutions and social practice" (Turner and Stagg 13). The hope is that individuals, too, no matter their area of study, can use the knowledge of how disability is misconstrued in our culture to affect change. For ultimately, human phenotypic variability is a natural occurrence, as well as "an inescapable element of human existence" (Couser 602). Perhaps then, and only then, can Frankenstein's "Abhorred monster" finally receive the justice he deserves.

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The Transmission and Permanence of Slang in the English Language

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Researching the concept of slang is an arduous task; researching the transmission and permanence of slang proves to be even more troublesome. The first issue arises with the treatment of slang in language. While slang is commonly spoken in informal conversation, it is tremendously frowned upon in formal writing. There are varying opinions on the role of slang in the English language and when, if ever, it should be acceptable to use slang. Slang starts off as an informal word or phrase that is specific to a group or subculture, but when a slang word reaches a certain elevated status based on its popularity, the word is often accepted into standard, formal language. With this issue, it is difficult to track a single slang word throughout the history of the English language. Many words do not reach the status needed in order to preserve them in the language. If a slang word has remained prominent in the English language for a considerable amount of time, around a generation, it has likely been accepted into standard language and is no longer technically considered slang. Therefore, it is most effective to study the transmission and permanence of slang in the English language by selecting a word or phrase in Old English that has evolved into slang terminology over time. The examination of how a slang word or phrase has evolved throughout the history of the English language helps to explain slang's role in a language and serves to demonstrate how slang is transmitted and gains permanence.

The appropriateness of slang use varies greatly among prominent literary figures, and this is due to the fact that there are many different and conflicting perceptions of slang. Bethany K. Dumas and Jonathan Lighter, authors of "Is *Slang* a Word for Linguists?," note,

> Although the phenomenon [of slang] has frequently been discussed, the term *slang* has rarely been defined in a way that is useful to linguists. Annoyance and frustration

> await anyone who searches the professional literature for a definition or even a conception of *slang* that can stand up to scrutiny. Instead one finds impressionism, much of it of a dismaying kind. (5)

Indeed, research on the topic does render conflicting viewpoints. There are two main definitions of slang that are in extreme opposition. One popular definition was given by Walt Whitman in 1885, saying that "slang or indirection is an attempt of common humanity to escape from bald literalism, and express itself illimitable . . . Slang, too, is the wholesome fermentation or eructation of those processes eternally active in language, by which froth and specks are thrown up, mostly to pass away; though occasionally to settle and permanently crystallize" (qtd. in Dumas and Lighter 5). Whitman's definition of slang is one of acceptance. The use of the expression "common humanity" is a crucial part of his definition because slang very much relies on a sense of commonality in order to function on a large enough scale to gain transmission and permanence. Whitman, a praised author, includes many slang words and phrases in his own writing, so he apparently believed in slang's ability to transcend informal language. Another popular perception of slang is seen in the definition given by John C. Hodges in 1967. Hodges argues, "Slang is the sluggard's way of avoiding the search for the exact, meaningful word" (qtd. in Dumas and Lighter 5). Hodges's definition attributes the use of slang to laziness, and he, quite obviously, does not approve of slang's usage. Hodges, being an impressive contributor to English academia and the author of the *Harbrace Handbook*, is unsurprisingly rigid in his definition of slang and its role in language.

The definition of slang, as it is understood by an average individual, is a combination of both of the previous definitions given by Whitman and Hodges. Slang is considered to be a type of language that consists of nonstandard, informal words and phrases that are popular or relevant among particular groups. This standard definition conveys the general understanding of slang, but this definition does not fully encompass slang's complex function in the English language. Like Whitman noted, slang is an effort of common humanity. Slang, in some sense, generates a sense of commonality or camaraderie among its speakers. People who use slang are expressing a sense of belonging, whether it is to a certain subculture or

generation. Slang words or phrases are created for specific people for specific purposes, so slang words are often unsuitable for use by the general population. Because slang is often confined to one group or subculture, transmitting slang outside of those groups and subcultures can be somewhat challenging. In order for slang to become broadly transmitted, the general population has to have a need for the word.

Elisa Mattiello, author of the article "The Pervasiveness of Slang in Standard and Non-Standard English," notes the challenging nature of defining slang in a manner that includes the particular nuances that the term carries as well as its peculiar political position in linguistics:

> Firstly, slang is a time-restricted ephemeral phenomenon . . . Secondly, slang has a rather wide, all-encompassing nature. Thus, due to terminological merging, the concept of slang is often made to correspond to such non-standard language varieties as cant, jargon, dialect, vernacular, or, more rarely, accent. The result is a rich range of opinions and definitions of slang that are often inadequate to characterize the phenomenon. (9)

Jargon, a type of language that consists of specialized words that are used by particular professions, has a similar definition to slang. Oftentimes, the two terms are considered synonymous, yet jargon is perceived to be developed and used by high-class intellectuals while slang is developed and used by low-class thugs. Both types of language create the same senses of belonging for some and alienation for others, but jargon and slang are perceived as representing opposite ends of the language spectrum. Both jargon and slang have muddled meaning to the general population, but jargon, a slang of upper echelon, is considered to be professional while slang is not. This brings about the political issues surrounding the transmission and permanence of slang in the English language.

Why is slang perceived as representing those of low socioeconomic standing? How does slang often become widely used and shared between general English speakers if it is so frowned upon? Why do jargon and slang have such different connotations if they are sometimes considered synonymous? Why is a slang word not simply called a neologism? Because slang relies so heavily on a sense

of commonality and often arises out of subcultures that subvert from the mainstream, it is seemingly difficult for slang terminology to be shared with larger groups in the language. Therefore, the transmission of slang relies heavily on the slang word's ability to be understood and expressed by larger groups of speakers. It appears as though the transmission of slang also relies on the societal standing of the source of the slang. If slang originates from a small subculture with minimal cultural influence, the slang is less likely to be widely transmitted. However, if slang is established or adopted by groups who are considered to be important, the slang is most likely to become more widely transmitted. Once the slang has been transmitted on a large scale, the word or phrase becomes generally accepted, and with acceptance comes permanence. In his book *The Stories of English*, David Crystal discusses the influence of fashion and trends on the English language. Crystal notes, "Attitudes to language are very much bound up with the conscious appreciation of the social trend which we refer to as *fashion*. Because language is quintessentially a social tool, we inevitably end up doing what other people do" (262). It can be inferred that if group-specific slang is somehow adopted by someone in power or someone with strong cultural influence, the slang is likely to be transmitted more extensively. Michael Adams, author of *Slang: The People's Poetry*, gives an example of how slang is adopted by those people outside of the language's originally-intended group or subculture. He tells about a humorous series of slang flash cards in which "every one of the cards pits the image against the word . . . The cartoon figures are not those from whom you expect the accompanying slang; they are stereotypes of Americans we suppose have little contact with slang." (56). To describe one of the cards, he writes, "a brunette in Chanel, hair pulled back, bag at her side, standing, rests her hands on an elegant desk; across from her a blonde in a paisley blouse sits on an upholstered chair, her legs crossed at the ankles, and says into the telephone, 'I can assure you that the Tupperware party will be mad crunk'" (56). In the example that Adams describes, the card is basing its humor on the fact that these people of the predominantly white upper class are using slang words established and used by people of the African-American lower class, and it tells a great deal about the nature of slang in relation to group identity.

The depiction of out-of-place slang demonstrates how clearly distinct formal and informal language seems to be, and it identifies

the stereotypes that are associated with certain styles of language. The use of out-of-place slang as a type of humor is also worth exploring because it explains how slang words begin to spread. In the example given by Adams, the slang is used by the speaker in order to sound *cooler*. The humor involved in the example implies that the speaker knows that he or she is being unauthentic in the use of the slang, and there is a sense of quirkiness added to the language based on this understanding. To return back to Whitman's definition of slang, he says that "froth and specks [of slang] are thrown up, mostly to pass away; though occasionally to settle and permanently chrystallize" (qtd. in Dumas and Lighter 5). In regards to the transmission and permanence of slang, the notion of slang *sticking* with a language is crucial. If slang is adopted by higher-class members of society that then spread the word to a larger group of people, even if the adoption of the word is done out of humor, irony, or trendiness, there is a chance that the slang will gain prominence and permanence in the language. Once the slang advances into a higher class, it gains more respect and recognition. It is almost as if the slang becomes actualized by the recognition of an outsider.

Basing this research on the transmission and permanence of slang in the English language on the knowledge that both transmission and permanence rely on slang's transition from lower-class language to upper-class language, it becomes apparent that, although slang may be considered informal and nonstandard, there are further divisions in slang's perceived role in language. There are people who use slang authentically, and there are those people who use the language to keep up with trends without fully being aware of the different nuances that the slang provides. For the creators of the slang, the word or phrase is written out of necessity. Perhaps there is a divide between the mainstream and the subculture that requires a new word to encompass a different understanding. The words "jewelry" and "bling" certainly convey a different meaning to the listener. One might imagine a simple gold necklace or a modest wedding ring as a reaction to the word "jewelry"; however, the word "bling" might entice images of rappers and large, diamond studded chains. While both words represent the same essential thing, the creators of the word "bling" obviously felt that there was a significant enough difference in desired meaning to necessitate a new word. Outsiders may use the word once it has

gained popularity, but rarely with the same authenticity as the original group.

In order to examine how slang has evolved throughout the course of the English language, beginning with a subject that necessitated a lot of words in Old English seems to be the most logical starting place. Similarly to the way that slang is created out of necessity for a new word to describe something in a new manner, Old English contained many words that referred to the same thing in a different context. Death is a concept that has necessitated new words to encompass different emotions. The words and phrases to describe death range in nuance from conveying respect to sugarcoating the concept. Death is such a culturally important subject that Old English has over forty expressions associated with it, some of which linger in Modern English slang or euphemisms. One of the forty expressions used in Old English to describe death is *becwelan* meaning "totally died off" (Crystal 1). In the book *Words in Time and Place: Exploring Language Through the Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary*, David Crystal notes, "We can't be sure about the nuances of meaning differentiating all of the verbs, but it's plain that the Anglo-Saxons were as concerned about finding different ways to talk about death as we are today" (2).

The next notable terminology for death is established in the early seventeenth century by William Shakespeare in *Hamlet.* Written in early Modern English, Shakespeare's *to shuffle off this mortal coil* (3.1.68) is reminiscent of the Old English *becwelan*. While it is not the exact same phrasing, the word *off* is significant enough in both of the phrases to draw a clear connection. From Shakespeare, the sense of the word *off* and its association with death appears to become popular, and it is used with many slang phrases and euphemisms associated with death. Because Shakespeare was and continues to be a powerful literary figure, his use of the word *off* appears to have started a linguistic trend. By the eighteenth century, *move off, pop off, pack off, and hop off* were all used as slang to discuss the act of dying. It seems as though it is more than mere coincidence that the word *off* became so popularly used after Shakespeare's use. His position in the literary community greatly impacted the language, and this can be seen through the surge of the many variations of the word *off* in the language that followed. It can be argued that Shakespeare's ability to spread the slang to a large-scale audience is the reason that the word *off* remains in

reference to death in modern language. His influence cannot be overstated. The word *off* continued to remain present in slang in the nineteenth century with the phrase *off it.* The popularity of the use of *off* in slang seems to have decreased since the surge of use caused by Shakespeare, but it still lingered in the language. The early twentieth century saw the wartime slang phrase *kick off*, which provides an understanding that the slang had persisted in the language, in some form, for three centuries consecutively. As the language continued to progress, the slang phrase *to off someone* came to mean to kill someone. Through this example, it becomes apparent that slang does not persist in language in its entirety, rather, aspects of the slang are borrowed and persist in that manner. Therefore, the transmission of slang can be seen as being reliant upon culturally-influential sources, as seen through Shakespeare.

The permanence of slang is not as firmly grounded, but it relies upon the slang evolving with the language to meet cultural needs. A slang word cannot persist in the language for a long period of time without being assimilated into the standard language, so for slang to persist in the language, it must evolve. A slang word or phrase may not persist as a whole throughout centuries, but aspects of the slang do linger in the progression of the language if the word is needed. Languages change; they evolve to better suit the needs of the people who use the language. As the English language evolves, slang evolves with it. Although the Old English word *becwelan* has no particular significance to the average speaker of Modern English, the meaning of the word carries a sentiment that most speakers of Modern English are familiar with. Slang persists in a language by maintaining the same sentiment in the word or phrase and evolving to better accommodate the needs of the speakers, and this can be seen by examining how the word *off* has been used in association with slang words for death throughout the history of the English language.

By examining how slang has evolved with the English language to better suit the speakers' needs, it becomes apparent that slang does play a significant role in the language, and it has played that role for the entirety of the language's history. As many linguists and grammarians have noted in the past, slang is a fickle concept. Pinpointing a definition of slang proves to be far more difficult than one might expect because of the perpetual argument surrounding slang's role in a language. The appropriateness of slang

and its role in language has been debated heavily in the past, and it continues to be scrutinized today. Some people consider slang to be a natural result of people using a language creatively, but other people consider slang to be inappropriate and lazy. The context of slang is critical to its understanding and acceptance. For some, slang arises out of the need to accommodate a new meaning. Authentic slang conveys a sense of community among its users. For others, slang is borrowed because of its perceived appeal. Slang is often borrowed as a result of trends, and it is seen as being cool, humorous, or ironic. When slang is borrowed by an outsider, it has greater potential to reach a larger group of people. By reaching larger groups, the slang is more likely to gain prominence, and through the gained prominence, the slang gains permanence in the language.

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Preaching Beside the Gutters: The City and the Church in *Piers Plowman* and *Mankind*

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While not commonly thought of as "medieval" space in a canon known for verdant nature and towering castles, the city has an impactful presence in two works that probe the strength of piety in a new and tempting urban world, William Langland's *Piers Plowman* and the morality play *Mankind*. Circulating in the late fourteenth and late fifteenth centuries, these two texts display anxiety towards the economic and cultural differences urbanization presents: namely mercantile trade in both works, a greater presence of beggary in *Piers Plowman*, and a culture of leisure over labor in *Mankind*. In *Piers Plowman*, the engagement with these differences takes place in the visions of the prologue and Passus seven of the B version. Both sections foreground the merchants that drive economics in the city, but whose occupation conflicts with Christian beliefs, as well as the beggars who live in squalor, and are at best in need or at worst living off the community. But despite this, the narrator looks at urbanity with a concern that intermittently crosses into scorn. *Mankind*, on the other hand, is more intense in its anxiety towards the differences of urban culture which are represented through the "Worldlings": Mischief, New-Guise, Nowadays, and Nought. These vulgar, deceptive, and leisurely vagrants reflect the attitudes pious people outside of cities held about its culture. The Worldlings perpetuate perceptions of city culture and people as sinful in their trade practices and loafing about. As a result, the play directly renounces urban culture and economics, instead praising rural living. In their engagement with mercantile trade, beggary, and a culture which emphasizes leisure, *Piers Plowman* and *Mankind* reveal how clerics and the pious attempted to make Christianity work within city life in two ways, either by accommodating to its culture or denouncing it. Subsequently, both texts reflect the complex, and at times conflicting, ways the city was met by churchmen and devout citizens.

Beginning with *Piers Plowman*, a passage showing how churchmen adapted Christianity to city life occurs during Passus seven, where Truth finds a compromise to the dilemma of merchants. In the passage, Piers—the titular plowman—receives a pardon from Truth for his simple, rural work. In describing the stipulations of the pardon for each class—who can and cannot receive it, and what some can do to better their chances—the narrator addresses the merchants' situation:

> But the pope would grant them no pardon from pain and guilt,
> Because they don't observe their holy days, as Holy Church teaches,
> And because they swear "by their soul," and "may God help them,"
> Against clean conscience, to sell their goods.
> (Langland 19-22)

From this passage, it is clear that the merchants' dilemma is tied to their business. Work prevents them from observing Church holidays and profit is the bottom-line of their trade. As a result, the merchant life and urban economics directly conflict with Christian practices. However, what follows complicates this outlook. In secret, Truth sends a letter to the merchants telling them to continue their business, but urges them to be charitable and active in religion, promising that doing so will "protect [them] from despair" (Langland 35). By allowing merchants to continue their trade while being able to follow and perform Christianity, Truth accommodates religion to the city's economic system, resolving the conflict it initially presented. Furthermore, Truth's action reflects a trend of personalized religion in urban centers that occurred between 1350 and 1550 in the form of parish fraternities (Benson 214). These urban religious groups were often formed by merchants with churchmen and consisted primarily of middle-class citizens, as membership requires payment of dues and donations to the fraternity. C. David Benson notes that the incentive of joining these groups was to receive spiritual benefits that one would normally be denied within the institutionalized Church: namely memorial prayer and the opportunity to shape the community (215). Similarly, Truth gives the merchants of the poem a way to

practice Christianity that is outside the official Church. In essence, whether knowingly or not, *Piers Plowman* foregrounds a subversive way in which churchmen accommodated Christianity to the city, in this case by working outside of the Church. All the while, it takes a stance on urban mercantilism that does not denounce it as unholy or evil.

But although Langland's text somewhat approves of the mercantile practices in the city, it takes a more critical stance on beggary that first appears in the prologue. In describing the classes he encounters, the narrator distinguishes beggars negatively in an individual stanza, the bulk of which shows the critical stance the text adopts:

> They faked [injury] to get food, fought at the ale.
> In gluttony, God knows, they go to bed,
> And rise with obscenity, those Robert's knaves!
> Sleep and shameful sloth follow them always.
> (Langland 42-45)

What is significant about this stanza is the language used. The narrator attaches qualities that are not only overtly negative, but parallel to sinfulness with gluttony, sloth, and wrath coming through his word choice. The narrator takes this stance further in Passus seven with a sermon-like passage explaining why beggary prevents one from receiving Truth's pardon: "Because he who begs or bids, unless he has real need, / He is in cahoots with the devil and cheats the needy" (Langland 66-67). Beggary then becomes not only sinful, but a devilish trick where the truly destitute people are left ignored. The narrator further justifies their exclusion by evoking biblical and scholarly passages, making it as clear-cut as possible.

And yet, like the merchant's situation, the stance on beggary in *Piers Plowman* is complicated. Towards the end of the aforementioned passage in Passus seven, the narrator emphasizes that it is those beggars who cannot work and accept their condition that can receive pardon. Interestingly, this conditional accommodation to beggars both mirrors and deviates from the practices of most urban Christian groups, such as parish fraternities, in regards to the city's less fortunate. While charity towards the poor and disabled in cities did occur, Gervase Rosser makes it apparent that it was the bare minimum: "The fragmentary character and humble scale of

these and other charitable ventures . . . were never commensurate to the actual need; the majority were directed rather to the respectable poor than to the unknown migrant or to the permanently indigent" (367). Like the parish fraternities, the narrator's view implies an idea of "respectable poor," but where parish fraternities likely meant fellow members, the narrator refers to those in true poverty and not looking to live off it. What is apparent by placing the text's stance on city beggary against its contemporary history is the existence of conflicting, and perhaps competing, discourses on how Christianity should incorporate the lower rungs of urban society into Christianity.

Although circulating nearly a century later, *Mankind* is equally concerned with Christianity's place in the city and how it should regard its culture. And like its predecessor, it sets its sights on the dilemma of merchant practices in the city. But where *Piers Plowman* advocates a willingness to comply with urban mercantilism, *Mankind* vehemently denounces the profiteering of merchants in a notable scene that involves money changing hands from the audience to the Worldlings. After a confrontation with Mankind, the tricksters decide that the best way to make the plowman abandon Mercy and his rural life is to call the devil, Titivilus. But to show him, New-Guise and Nowadays request money from the audience so he can appear. The dialogue surrounding this scene characterizes it as a sale and one where greed is at the center. For example, Mischief reminds the others that summoning Titivillus involves *si dedero*, or "if I give something . . . I expect something" (Mankind 762n3). This Latin phrase implies that the Worldlings and Titivillus are promising the devil's presence with the expectation of payment. Likewise, audience members are giving their money expecting to be entertained. As a result, mercantile trade and a want of more beyond what life already gives, more money and more leisure, is brought to the foreground and aligned to the most immoral figures in the play. In addition, because the audience is unknowingly paying to see the devil, there is an emphasis on the sale as deceptive and unholy. Such characterization mimics the way contemporary moralists thought about the city and the economics associated with it. As Rosser notes, in and outside the city there was a feeling among the pious that the "widening scale of economic enterprise . . . [encouraged] townspeople to believe that their world had outgrown the old values of simplicity, honesty and truth" (368). Subsequently, the city

was perceived by the devout as a world where deception and greed are ever-present in business. Aligning itself with this ideology that denounces urban economics, *Mankind* intensifies it by making the hands of the urban merchant those of the Worldlings and the devil. In relation to *Piers Plowman*, the existence of an inconsistency in how the devout in the later medieval attempted to bring Christianity to the city becomes more apparent.

Alongside its condemnation of urban mercantilism, *Mankind* is also equally engaged in the city's leisure culture, embodied by the Worldlings, in a way that is reminiscent of the stance *Piers Plowman* takes on needless beggary. Throughout the play, the Worldlings are best described as middle-class vagrants. They are never seen working, but neither do they appear in squalor and are at times dancing, playing games, or singing to delightful effect. In the context of the play's circulation during the mid to late-fifteenth century, circa 1465 to 1470, such an excess of mirth was likely present amongst the urban middle-class. Rosser notes that in the aftermath of the plague, the middle-class that survived had an opportunity to enjoy entertainments ranging from books and music to games like archery or tennis, so the Worldlings behavior is not atypical (365). Nevertheless, it complicates the play's intention, as it makes the supposed evil, urban figures tolerable to the audience compared to Mankind's weakness and Mercy's frequent preaching. Not only that, but Kathleen M. Ashley's introduction to the text notes that the play is associated with the pre-Lenten season, a time of sanctioned excess and disregard for decency, making the interpretation of the play as encouraging such behavior tempting.

However, like the narrator of *Piers Plowman*, the play associates the excessive mirth of the Worldlings with a sinful disregard for others and community. In a dialogue between the Worldlings and Mankind—lines 702 to 721—the fun they partake in becomes less comedic and more devious, as an excerpt of New-Guise speaking to Mankind shows: "As it may be verified by us brethellys everychone. / Ye shall go rob, steal, and kill as fast as ye may gon" (*Mankind* 708). Just as the beggary in *Piers Plowman* is emphasized by a disregard the needy, so is the mirth of the Worldlings punctuated by a disregard for institutions such as property, marriage, and Church. Even in the midst of revelry, such a stark change from singing about excrement to murder and adultery would stand out to the audience. Similarly to *Piers Plowman,* the play approves of

indecency up to a point by disrupting the revelry of the play with Mercy. In turn, the play again emphasizes the mixed opinions the devout have of the city and urban culture. The result is a blended message in which *Mankind* overtly denounces city life in some ways, yet opens itself to it in other ways.

What is obvious about these two texts, and perhaps other works like them, is the tremendous influence they had on how the city is envisioned in society and art even in the twenty-first century. Still today, cities are thought of in a manner akin to *Piers Plowman* and *Mankind*, decrepit spaces full of swindlers thinking only of themselves. Yet, more interesting is how congruent and incongruent the texts are and what it reveals about later medieval Christianity. From reading and analyzing these works alongside the cultural history of the spaces they depict, it becomes clear that although the Catholic Church had a tremendous presence throughout the medieval period, individuals of the later centuries would noticeably begin taking religion into their own hands. As such, *Piers Plowman*, *Mankind*, and maybe even other late medieval dream visions or secular plays open-up an opportunity to look at a narrowed collection of texts as possible influencers of Protestant reformation.

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An Analysis of the Potato Being a Symbol for Humanity's Need for Loss throughout James Joyce's Works

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If you had to encapsulate all of humanity in one word, what would it be? A disease? A virtue? Chances are, the word used to describe humanity would be something lofty and all encompassing. But James Joyce challenges this notion by trying to define humanity all through one city, Dublin. He claims that if he can get to the heart of Dublin, especially in his iconic work *Ulysses*, then he can get to the heart of and understand greater humanity. While this is his main goal in one work, all of Joyce's novels contribute by showing how humanity creates its story and identity when experiencing a sense of loss. While it may seem that Dublin is the key to understanding humanity, Joyce successfully narrows the understanding of humanity down to something even more minute: a potato. By getting to the heart of and understanding a potato, Joyce's works comment on the greater implications of loss and love within humanity. Similar to a potato, it may be essential for humanity to lose a part of itself in order to truly understand love and create a future, more meaningful life.

Before understanding a potato as a symbol within Joyce, it is first important to understand the reproductive necessities of a potato and why fracture is necessary for germination in its lifecycle. As seen within UC Berkley's "Potato Genome Project," potatoes reproduce through cloning. To grow potatoes, you cut off a piece of an already existent potato and bury it, and a new potato buds out of this buried piece. This is the most common way to grow potatoes, and it is very rare to grow potatoes from seeds ("Potato Genome Project" 1). In other words, having an entirely new, non-cloned potato is almost nonexistent. Rather, it is primarily through a partial loss of itself that potatoes are able to reproduce. In this way, the potato connects life and loss in that it is by experiencing a loss of itself that potatoes continue to grow new life.

Though not explicitly related to the potato, Joyce's thematic use of gnomon speaks to the implicit importance of loss that occurs in human life, and this loss present in the gnomon actually greater

highlights the original loss and the potential that can bud from this void. In geometry, a gnomon is a parallelogram with a smaller parallelogram missing from it. This is a reoccurring theme for Joyce, specifically through *Dubliners*, where many of the characters experience a greater discovery of life, or an epiphany, after first losing a sense of themselves. When discussing the importance of these forced absences, Robert Newman's "South Atlantic Review" remarks, "By requiring the readers to supply the missing section, Joyce forces them to assume the authorial presence, to become co-creators of the text" (Newman 141). In this way, characters losing a part of themselves forces the reader to apply meaning to the work to further gain knowledge of the text, but because each reader is a "co-creator" of meaning, what each person gets from the work may be a seemingly independent variation of another reader's interpretation of the text. That being said, because both interpretations stem from one "authorial" loss, the readers' perceived individuality might be just a clone of that which was said before. In this way, perhaps even Joyce's redefinition of the English language was an individualized clone of influential thinkers like Milton who came before him. As a result, Joyce created life-giving works in response to the "missing sections" he saw in literature's roots.

Not only does this sense of meaning from void exist from meta-commentary, however, because the characters within Joyce's works, particularly *Ulysses*, grapple with this same sense of loss as they try to create meaning from fracture. Joyce encapsulates this sense of creation in loss in his usage of "potato" throughout *Ulysses*; Leopold Bloom, as the character united with the first usage of this term, appears to cling to his potato as he attempts to fill the voids of his failing marriage and dead son, Ruddy. When Leopold prepares breakfast for his wife, Marion, and tries to forget the increasingly detached marriage they have, he remarks, "potato I have" (*Ulysses* 57). The annotations of *Ulysses* say the "potato" was considered a continuity of life. This proves interesting because the Potato Famine of Ireland links the "potato" to the loss of many lives. While these concepts appear to be contradictory, it is also important to note that the Great Famine largely changed the Irish culture and identity. In this way, though the Famine could potentially show Ireland at its worst, perhaps during its greatest time of loss and hardship, the identity of Ireland was most growing and connected. As a result, though Leopold has this great sense of loss in his life

from the loss of his son and distanced marriage, by clinging to his "potato," he clings to this sense of hope in a continuity of life and connection through these losses.

While Bloom holds onto this potato as a source of greater connection to his son and wife, it is interesting that his potato is more a part of his mother than it is Bloom himself. The potato is "A talisman heirloom" (*Ulysses* 476) from Bloom's mother. There is no explanation for why she gave it to him, but just as she gave up her virginity to give life to her son, she gave up her potato to give Bloom a hope for finding the beautiful in the void. Commenting on the essential loss of a woman's virginity for future life in relation to colonialism, Shen Fuying's article "Childhood, Gender, and Nation in *Ulysses*" states, "The purity of a nation is often allegorized by the loss of virginity, which results in the transformation of a girl to a whore-like woman" (Fuying 58). In this way, Bloom's mother giving him the potato presents her "transformation" from her lost innocence and detaches her even further from her "pure" childhood. That being said, it further connects her son with the past and allows him to search for beauty and greater meaning in the loss of his son and wife while also offering him a concrete connection to his roots.

While this connection between Leopold and his mother makes sense in light of his apparent voids, it is complicating that this important "heirloom" came from Bloom's mother when Stephen's mother is the most prominently noted mother in all of Joyce's stories. Through Stephen's repressed guilt of not kneeling by her side while she died, readers might anticipate this need for connection to his past inescapable failure. This moment may appear one entirely of loss for Stephen as he physically lost his mother and also emotionally loses his connection to her because he recognized that she never truly understood him. That being said, it is important to remember, as Stephen continues to grow into the artist he was destined to be, this moment of loss proves a source of creation and passion for his works. If "the object of the artist is the creation of the beautiful," (Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* , 162) then the death of Stephen's mother serving as his "artistic object" creates a "beautiful" text where a man struggles to cope with the loss of his mother and the torn, emotional roots he once attributed to family.

If Joyce's usage of "potato" shows up primarily in this positive light, its relation to the gnomon would be a near simplistic evaluation where loss serves solely to bring further life; however, as much

as the potato brings about a new life, it also serves as a reminder of humanity's mortality and temporal nature. When Leopold goes into a brothel, one of the prostitutes slides her hand "into [Bloom's] pocket and brings out a hard black shriveled potato" (Joyce, *Ulysses* 476). The potato is "hard black [and] shriveled," implying Bloom's darkening relation to the Irish identity as he beings to recognize himself as an outsider amongst his friends in Dublin. Where, before, Bloom clung to his "potato" as an outlet to forget about the losses of Marion and Rudy, the emasculating prostitutes steal it and force Leopold to face reality. The prostitutes immediately afterwards force Bloom into sexually submissive positions, and Bloom does not ask for the potato back until after these exploits. In this way, perhaps Bloom's need for the potato is in itself temporal and something that he needs only when he does not feel connected to another person.

Interestingly through this sense of loss, though showing Bloom's temporal need for connection, Bloom consistently embodies a more urgent need to create meaning out of loss and understand what it truly means to be Irish. Agata Szeczeszak-Brewer's "Joyce's Vagina Dentata" recognizes that there is a connection between loss and cultural identity and states that a "connection exists between the feminine and the threat of loss. For Irish nationalists it is the loss of purity and order, for artists it is the loss of artistic inspiration" (Szeczeszak-Brewer 2). In this way, the loss of Bloom's potato may actually represent the progression of his lost Irish identity and voiced authorship. When Bloom loses his potato, prostitutes take over the story and largely overpower Bloom's voice. However, by asking for his potato to be returned to him, Bloom aims to take back his Irish identity and the text. Just as "Irish nationalists" want Ireland to remain an independent nation from England, Bloom wants his voice to be independent from the prostitutes, and he asserts himself as the "artist" of the story. While Bloom losing his potato makes him more "feminine" by placing him in this inferior role, asserting that he wants it back allows him to be a father figure toward Stephen and serve as the everyday Irish man's messiah, yearning to create and demonstrate meaning out of perceived loss and nothingness.

As Bloom begins to take on a greater role as an artist, Joyce begins to assert his own voice more through Bloom than through Stephen as he did in the past, potentially paralleling Joyce's need

to find meaning through his own diminishing ability for creation. Richard Ellman's *James Joyce* discusses how Joyce was losing his eyesight as he simultaneously was working on both *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake*. Ellman notes, "Through blear eyes [Joyce] guessed at what he had written on paper, and with obstinate passion filled the margins and the space between the lines with fresh thoughts" (Ellman 574). Just as Bloom was focused on finding and creating meaning in his life with the loss of his wife, son, and potato, Joyce had a gnomon in his own life when he lost his ability to clearly see the pages through which his artistry and livelihood came into fruition. Though there is proof that Joyce had planned out these works before his eyesight completely faded, Joyce having to write these works with his face very close to the paper or having to orate his thoughts to a different scribe suggests that his hearing was forcibly becoming more sensitive. In this way, both the ending section of *Ulysses* and the entire presentation of *Finnegan's Wake* become more melodic pieces. With the loss of Joyce's eyesight, he gained a new sense of "artistic inspiration" and redefined the boundaries of authorship by writing with a focus on audible sensitivity.

Comparable to Joyce's redefined artistry, as Molly begins to embrace new definitions of femininity, she loses the traditional "inspiration" of an Irish woman and gains a new, more accurate depiction of Ireland than perhaps does any other character in the work. When Molly discusses how Milly acted when she lived with her, she notes that Milly "wouldn't even teem potatoes for you of course she's right not to ruin her hands" (*Ulysses* 766). It is interesting that Milly "wouldn't even teem the potatoes" because this is a largely feminine expectation that Milly refuses to accept. Though this is just one example of this refusal, Milly can be viewed as the most mobile, free character in the work because she gets physically outside of Dublin while every other character remains within its confines. Milly finds escape and a chance at a new life within her own solitude. Not only this, but Molly admits "she's right not to ruin her hands," suggesting that Milly may have inspired Molly to think beyond her gendered limitations and deny the forced paralysis Irish patriarchy forces upon women. Much like passed down patriarchal expectations, cloning is the way potatoes are largely produced; as a result, it is easier for them to contract diseases because no new genes are introduced to the potato to create a defense against them ("Potato Genome Project" 1). This

parallels to the paralysis of gendered expectations patriarchy clones within men and women, and it takes Milly being created through a new "seed" by leaving Dublin for Molly to be awakened from her own cloned expectations and begin planting her own true beliefs in the readers.

While Molly is the most physically paralyzed character of the work, she has a refreshing and hopeful view of what Joyce and Bloom might originally perceive as an unacceptable stagnation and failure. While Leopold attempts and arguably successfully creates new life out of the loss of his son and his failing marriage, Molly sees beauty and love in the marriage with Leopold, despite its changing nature from what it may originally have been. When she recalls the moment she and Leopold became one in the minutes before their engagement, she recalls, " I gave him the bit of seedcake out of my mouth" (Joyce, *Ulysses* 782). This is not the first time this instance is brought to the readers' attention, as Leopold also remembers the scene with the "seedcake" as being potentially the most intimate moment he had with his wife that he longs to recreate. After giving up part of her "seedcake" to join with Leopold, Molly recalls how she wanted Leopold to finally ask her to marry him. In this way, like Leopold, Molly finds connection and creates a new life with Leopold after first giving up a part of herself to be with him.

While Leopold seemingly considers this connection to exist only in the past, however, Molly brings this connection to the present situation and creates a new connection with readers by utilizing the love and beauty she still perceives in her present but hidden love for Bloom. After Bloom asks Molly to marry him, she says, "yes I said yes I will, yes" (*Ulysses* 783). While thinking about her proposal, Marion seemingly loses her physically present voice and escapes into her own thoughts through an orgasm. In this way, Molly experiences *la petite mort* and loses a part of herself by dreaming of this connection that she once had. Some may say this further shows Molly's disconnect with her husband in that she does not connect with him in life and rather seeks connection in her affairs; however, the orgasm occurs in the present, portraying that the love that she once had for Leopold is a part of the person she is today. While Leopold almost perceives the love he has for his wife as a blatant impossibility, Molly transforms the love she has for her husband into not only a fantastical connection with

him but also the readers in the most intimate, beautifully static way possible.

With Molly's orgasm being the final words of the work, *Ulysses* ends with an all-encapsulating conclusion that draws readers in and allows them to connect truly with a character in the most intimate way possible, but this is not the ending Joyce gave his readers at the finale of his career. Instead, Joyce lefts his readers with *Finnegan's Wake*'s ending that takes them directly back to the beginning and offers new life from an ending. Anna Livia Plurabelle fades out of her ending monologue both through her perceived orgasm and imagined death and states, "My leaves have drifted from me. All. But one clings still. I'll bear it on me. To remind me of. Lff!" (*Finnegan's Wake* 628). In other words, as ALP's life and all that matters to her begin to "drift from" her, all that still "clings" to her she "bears" because she values the life she has. As "Lff" almost sounds like life, the text suggests through her impending death that ALP finds beauty and value in the life she had. Implicitly from this, the reader not only sees the progression of ALP into finding value in her own life, but he also witnesses Joyce's final note of progress as an author. While initially Joyce might have seen ALP's ending as a failure, he ends the work with an empathetic acceptance that maybe a well lived, beautiful life is not always one with a grand adventure or a world-changing epiphany. Rather, maybe the tiny moments when a person truly connects with the world in stasis is equally good and beautiful in its own way.

As this work is Joyce's unintentional final goodbye to his readers, it is interesting that the section never actually ends; rather, the ending of both ALP and Joyce's stories take the reader back to the origin of the humanity's story. *Finnegan's Wake* takes the readers back to the origin of sin and defines humanity as the "manroot of all evil" (*Finnegan's Wake* 169). This proves interesting because even when the reader begins to gain knowledge about humanity within Shem the Pen Man's section, Joyce forces them into the first great loss of mankind. The "manroot of all evil" implies Adam and Eve's original sin which made humanity lose its initial innocence but gain the need for God's son to become man and enter the world. In this way, it is through the loss of humanity's innocence that we grow humanity and life, as we know it today, for better or for worse. Not only this, but as Catholicism is such a large part of Joyce's presented Irish identity, this story also holds a large "root"

in getting to the heart of Dublin's culture. "Manroot" appears an interesting way to relate to Adam and Eve's story because it is also a common name for plants with extremely long "roots." In this way, Joyce speaks to the long "roots" and stories of all humanity and how the true nature of humanity and Dublin cannot be told without first going back and recognizing specific moments in the lives of a few humans and how they contribute to the history of a city and mankind.

In this way, Joyce wants to get to "root" or stem of each of his characters in order to get to the heart of humanity. What is interesting, however, is that a potato is a stem. The story of humanity cannot be told with first recognizing Adam and Eve, but the Bible tells us Eve was grown out of Adam's rib to become woman. Through the lacking of Adam's rib, Eve is born, and mankind is created in the lacking that occurs through the losses of innocence and voids throughout an extended line of ancestry. Considering history in this light, no story completely ever ends because it is a culmination of all occurring in the present and all that happened in the past going down to one single "root," stem, potato, or human. For Joyce, *Finnegan's Wake* was unknowingly his final goodbye to readers, but the story never truly ends. His goal was to get to the "root" of all humanity, but he does this not through one single work but in a culmination of all that he wrote in his career. For readers to truly understand humanity in this way, it requires that they understand the authorial "root" which is Joyce himself. Thus, readers must analyze the collection of his stories to understand where he came from, how he developed, and what he admires and is becoming at the end of his life. In other words, if we, as readers, can get to the heart of Joyce as an author, we can see the parts he sacrificed of himself in order to give life to Dublin and greater humanity within his works.

By first understanding the way potatoes creates life out of fragmentation, readers begin to get to the heart of humanity and understand that loss may be essential to understanding love and creating life. Joyce's main goal was to show that if he could get to the heart of Dublin, he could get to the heart of humanity. Joyce being such an intelligent, transformative writer, however, seemingly limits which individuals can benefit from this by making his works so difficult to understand. Rather, the meaning lies in finding parts of these stories that overlap with the reader's own narrative and

recognizing that the moments experienced in the life of one man on one day in Dublin can relate to the life of one girl on one day as she reads his novel in her apartment in Denver decades later. Especially reading this work in light of a year of blatant fragmentation within our nation, the concept of the gnomon is ever-present, as individuals scramble to find connection, life, and meaning in a state of perceived hopelessness. Even when a reader may only connect with a few moments in a chapter, perhaps these nuggets of advanced meaning make Joyce powerful because they link the reader to something specific and relatable. While Joyce tackles the seemingly impossible task of linking humanity down to one single city, he goes above and beyond and creates hope for humanity out of a potato: though at first there may be fracture, it is only a matter of time before life and possibility begins to bud.

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Progress and the Development of Democracy in the American West: the Taming of the West in *The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean*

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Since the Age of Exploration, the ideals of settling so-called wild and untamed lands have featured prominently in literature and culture as a myth of progress and conquest. In his book *Gunfighter Nation*, Richard Slotkin described the importance of national ideology as a means to understand the existence of a nation and the importance of cultural myths to support and consolidate this ideology (Slotkin 5-6). The Western genre has contributed to the American ideology through literature since independence; however the Western film genre has essentially replaced the antiquated icons of the West such as Chief Winnetou and Buffalo Bill Cody with new icons such as John Wayne and Clint Eastwood. This replacement of old icons refocuses the genre away from just captivity narratives and stories of gunfighters into a more broadened genre, with which to tell stories about American Indian genocide, law and order, racial tensions, repression, identity conflicts, national expansion, and the expansion of American democracy; nowhere in this film genre are these new myths more present than in the Revisionist Western from the New Hollywood era. The Revisionist Western uses historical settings in the American frontier to tell stories with deeper, contemporary meaning or to question the national ideology and mythos; this style of examining national ideology was especially prevalent during the Vietnam War era, when the American public lost faith in the national government and ideology (Slotkin, 626). A lesser known film from this era, *The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean*, depicts the transformation and progression of a small town in rural West Texas as a circle; it continually transforms from a desert village into a modernized town, then into an industrialized oil city, and finally into a barely inhabited museum in the middle of the desert. The reign of "Judge" Roy Bean features cruel pun-

ishments, a disregard for the rule of law, and excessive violence, but the reign of Frank Gass, the mayor, features the use of the law to consolidate his personal power and maintain law and order in the domesticated town. The central conflict of progress exists as a contest between the Judge's western democracy and Frank Gass' industrialized society. This film examines the implementation of progress in a small Texas town and the development of democracy from a wild land. The film shows, how progress can become counter-productive and eventually overthrow democracy of the people and establish a tyrannical government.

After the Judge eliminates the threats of wild men and criminals, the town of Langtry begins to expand and attract law-abiding settlers as well as corrupt easterners like the Judge's ideological rival, Frank Gass. In his essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Frederick Jackson Turner characterizes the West as a meeting place between the savageness and the civilization; he claims that people on the frontier adapt to the wilderness and transform from Europeans to Americans (Turner 38-39). The Judge is such a person, who has arrived to the savageness of the West, conquered it, adapted to it, and adopted it to become a western man. Frank Gass originally arrives to the town of Langtry from Missouri to claim the property occupied by the town and the Judge and attempts to reason with this western man, as if he were an Easterner like Gass. Gass represents the stereotypical Easterner; he is highly educated, snobbish, arrogant, devious, opportunistic, and patient. Such an example of a man from a long-tamed frontier acts as a foil for the brash character of the Judge.

The Judge's rugged behavior and willingness to take the law into his own hands reflects an idealized American frontiersman, who through sheer determination and hard work conquers the wild lands and makes them available to cultivate democracy. His courtroom and bar symbolizes his conquest of the Wild West and the cornerstone, on which he intends to build his city in the West. He personifies, however, a pioneer, who rejects the established order of the East and the wilderness of the west to build his own personal realm based on his frontier justice. In his essay "Contributions of the West to American Democracy," Frederick Jackson Turner relates this idealized frontiersman with the former president, Andrew Jackson, who defied the established order of conventional politics and pursued his own personal agenda through his strong will (Turner

85-86). The Judge does so similarly, as he dispenses justice as he sees fit to maintain strict order in his town and to rid it of perceived outlaw influences. With his crony deputies under him, the Judge is able to establish his town as off limits to undesirable practices regardless of what the law actually states. Turner also writes, that "The idea of the personality of the law was often dominant over the organized machinery of justice. That method was best which was most direct and effective" and "In a word, the unchecked development of the individual was the significant product of this frontier democracy" (85). In the film, western democracy is a fading ideal due to the centralization of industries, end of free land, and the end of the wilderness; it reflects the idealistic ideal of an individual conquering the wilderness for his personal gain as well as establishing a new domestic society.

The Judge strives to create a new order in the Wild West and make it safe for development of democracy and economic development; he does so through frontier justice and merciless implementation of it. Benjamin F. Wright Jr. in his essay "Political Institutions and the Frontier" challenges the Turner thesis and presents a new thesis on the development of American democracy between the domestic East and Wild West; he refutes the notion, that settlers were creative in the formation of new constitutions, laws, and political institutions (Wright 34-35). The Judge does create a society out of his personal ideology, but his ideology of frontier justice comes from the preconceived ideas of democratic institutions of the eastern democracies compels him to reestablish traditional governments with traditional means. Just as the Judge works to establish the law and bring order to the wilderness of West Texas, so does Frank Gass, after his first encounter with the Judge's court. At first, Frank Gass is the perfect representation of imitative American Pioneer, who copies the procedures and political institutions of the old, eastern democracies and applies them to the new frontier-settlements, but over time his use of eastern democratic techniques perverts the town and drives it to tyranny.

Three quarters of the way through the film, the Judge experiences an ideological and personal crisis, which results in his abandonment of Langtry for a period of 20 years. His mugging in San Antonio, the death of his mistress in childbirth, the challenge to his authority to hang a negligent doctor, and the democratic election of Frank Gass as mayor collectively break his spirit and lead him to realize, that he

is no longer relevant or welcome in his own town. The Judge built the town through his own initiative and must abandon it, because it has abandoned his western democracy in order to open itself up to modernity, commercialism, and popular democracy based on eastern ideals. In this way he is a type of ideological hero, who cannot abide by the changing times and decides to abandon his town rather than stand against the change. In *Gunfighter Nation*, Slotkin describes the notion of a hunter-hero as an archetype of a settler, who is not constrained by moral or civic values and thusly is free to serve the needs of the masses and pacify the wilderness (Slotkin 34). This abandonment of the town by the Judge symbolizes the rejection of western democracy and society for the sake of progress and more industrialization and commercialization. The Judge rides off without pomp or circumstance on horseback into the desert as a reflection of his introduction in the beginning of the film; however his return to Langtry features no forewarning and depicts him as a mythological figure, who has returned to save a long-forgotten town from the grasp of Frank Gass.

If Frank Gass' city in the desert represents the complete and final domestication of wild lands, then the return of the Judge from exile represents the spirit of the western society to reclaim its identity and liberate itself from eastern domesticity and order. When the Judge rides back into town upon his horse, his daughter Rose remarks, that, "That man on horseback, looks like something out of an old picture book." Tector, an old marshal, barkeeper, and guardian of Rose, looks up at the newly returned Judge and responds, "You don't often see a man riding a horse through this town anymore. Just some old timer, who don't know civilization, has set in." Slotkin personifies hunter-hero as an ideological-ambivalent figure, who rejects commercialization and industrialization for a more primitive existence, thus he either must sacrifice his life or retreat to a further wilderness (Slotkin 34). The Judge has returned to purify his town from the wayward eastern influences and agents and reclaim it for western democracy and frontier justice; he accomplishes this through rounding up his old marshals and razing everything in town that either represents Frank Gass or his perverse form of progress. As brazenly as he exterminated the bar of murderous thieves in the beginning, the Judge defiantly rids the town of its new eastern institutions and dies in a blazing fire; this fire purifies the town and liberates it from the perceived interlopers.

In his essay "The Problem of the West," Frederick Jackson Turner describes the West more as a form of society rather than a concrete geographic area, whose social conditions are constantly changing (Turner 63). The West is the birthplace for new institutions and new ideas due to its free land coupled with its constant attempt to reinvent itself from older institutions and ideas into a new society; this new society always attempts to shed off its primitive history and assimilate itself to eastern models, but these western societies however never truly abandon their roots based in its frontier experience (63-64).

Although the film's title is *The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean*, the film focuses on the story of Langtry, its constant reinvention, its history of lawlessness and order, and its transformation from a barely inhabited village in the middle of nowhere, to a growing town, an industrial city, and ultimately returned to a barely inhabited village in the desert. This depiction of Langtry exemplifies Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis of the West as a constantly changing society. In "The Problem of the West", he describes the history of American democracy as constantly evolving and adapting to changes in the environment of settlement; this changing democracy features prevalently in the American West (Turner 63-64). The town changes with each dominant group from the bandits, the Judge and his court, Gass and hiss industry, and Tector and the Station-master, but the Jersey Lilly remains a constant symbol of the town's history and survival from the Wild West into a forgotten part of American history. More specifically, the Jersey Lilly represents the constant presence of justice, peace, law, and order in the town, all of which have survived wild men, killers, gangsters, and total destruction. The Jersey Lilly was established in the wilderness by the Judge from a simple dilapidated shack occupied by murderous thieves and became the only functioning court for hundreds of miles of land. The greatest threat to the hero is the threat to his legacy, which comes near the end of the film, when Frank Gass orders his police force to burn Rose and Tector out and raze it to the ground, but the returned Judge stands before the shocked bystanders and declares that he is justice incarnate.

During Frank Gass' tenure as mayor and patron of Langtry, he makes substantial changes to the land, economy, and politics; this symbolizes the end of the American frontier and the civilizing of western society. Tector the bartender further narrates, how the

town, nation, and world have changed, since the Judge abandoned it over 20 years ago. In his narration, he explains how the populist and progressive movements have produced Theodore Roosevelt, whom Tector describes as the nation's finest president, American intervention in Europe, women's suffrage, the implementation of prohibition, and the collectivization of the oil industry under Frank Gass. In his essay, "Contributions of the West to American Society," Frederick Jackson Turner explains the major factors and changes in 19th Century America, which signaled the end of the American frontier and western democracy; the four factors mentioned include: the closing off of free land and western expansion, concentration of capital to a few large industrial entities, American expansionism outside of North America, and political party reformation with inclusion of varying influences of Socialism (Turner 78-80). Gass exemplifies all of these changes, which contributed to the end of western democracy except for the American expansionism outside of North America; however Tector's narration makes reference to Theodore Roosevelt and the First World War, both of which are examples of American interventionism in foreign lands. Gass ends the idea of free land by his oil and land claims, he concentrates all the capital in the town to himself, and his usage of popular democracy and collectivization essentially end the notion of western democracy.

What Gass ultimately uses to threaten western democracy is his collectivization and his self-serving government; he establishes a city in the west built upon repression, violence, and intimidation. When he demands that Tector and Rose vacate the Jersey Lilly within a couple of weeks, he refers to her father's dream of commercializing the town and making it a place, where the common man could build a life for himself through hard work. In contrast to the archetype of the hunter-hero figure, which the Judge represents, Slotkin describes the yeoman-farmer, who serves as an agrarian figure and works with other like-minded settlers to make a collective society and cultivate democracy (Slotkin 33-34). After Rose forces him from the once great court, Tector tries to assure her that the town has progressed into a modernized civilization and any attempt to fight back is futile; Rose rebukes this notion and says to Tector, "Civilization? Well, I won't let it swallow us up. I won't stand by and see my father's house, birthplace of law and order, turned into a gasoline station." Frank Gass fits neither

archetype, but rather he is beyond the settler and becomes a threat to American and western democracies as an industrial tyrant. Frederick Jackson Turner described in his essay, "Social Forces in American History," the tendency of the powerful industrialists to call themselves pioneers in a changed American society; these industrialists seek to increase their own wealth and exercise more power in their own dominion of the land (Turner 160). He claims to be a pioneer and to support the Judge's dream of making the wilderness habitable for democracy, but his ultimate goal is to enrich himself by eliminating the chances of others to make a new life for themselves.

Tector's narration between the disappearance of the Judge and his mythical return further demonstrates a current in American democracy brought about by western expansion and democracy. He praises Theodore Roosevelt as the finest president, which the nation has ever had, and he expresses his contempt for the suffrage and temperance movements. As a counterpoint to the desire for large-scale industrialists to exploit the land and workers for their own profit and power he mentioned in "Social Forces in American History", Frederick Jackson Turner described an opposing ideology created through western expansion to conserve natural resources and preserve American democracy through curing the power and influence of big business and limiting corporate authority (Turner 160-161). This progressive ideology sought to return the right of competitiveness to the people through busting monopolies and trusts as well as to protect the remaining frontier from exploitation and over usage. Such an ideology would have appealed to the common people like Rose and Tector and would have helped them to continue to have a chance to live in a democratic town; however, the regressive presidency of Howard Taft, the involvement in the First World War, and the 1920's era of big business effectively silenced progressive thought and allowed Gass to build up his western dominion.

Langtry's transformation from small desert town to Oil Empire exemplifies the crisis between big business and the common workers, which arose from the economic development and industrial expansion and gave rise to the political ideologies of Populism and Progressivism. Tempting as it may be to paint this conflict between the ultimate conflict of ideology between Gass and the Judge as simply a conflict between Populism and Progressivism; Richard

Slotkin however cautions against this false dichotomy and explains them instead as two halves of the same coin. In *Gunfighter Nation*, he explains how both of which stem from the same ideological imperatives of economic development, the cultivation of popular democracy, and the significance of the frontier (Slotkin 22-23). The Judge first appears as a mythical progressivist-figure, when he establishes the town, but Frank Gass compels him to become a populist-figure in order to reclaim the frontier, economy, and democracy for the people. Conversely, Frank Gass does not simply represent a progressivist figure; instead he surpasses progressivism and becomes the enemy of progressivism. The main problem of identified by the progressive movement was the unchecked power of big business and its conflict with labor movements; this tense conflict could only be eased through strict regulation of monopolies and the return of economic opportunity and liberty to the working class (Slotkin 22-23). At the end of the film, the progressivist movement is at its end, and government is either unwilling to or unable to check Gass' power, then the Judge as a mythic populist-figure rides into town to serve justice and to return the town away from industrial tyranny and back to western democracy.

Although both the Judge and Frank Gass consider themselves pioneers who bring civilization to the savage West, their intentions and ideologies create a conflict between progress for the sake of progress and progress for democracy. The Judge's desire to create order in the West through violence and repression served the people by making the West safe enough for democracy to flourish. Frank Gass used violence, repression, and collectivization to make the West safe enough for big business to expand and make him wealthy. Frank Gass used his power to replace the old ideology of the pioneers to settle to wilderness for the freedom of all people with his ideology of exploitation of the West for his own personal gain. This conflict demonstrates the problem of a society, which holds progress and development in esteem more high than the rights and freedoms of the entire population. This depiction of crisis of class struggle and the waning of democracy exemplifies the power of a Revisionist Western to relate historical struggles to contemporary times. The Revisionist Western has succeeded in revolutionizing the Western genre to a point that the audience can relate to American history and better understand their place in the grand scheme of it. *The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean* at

its core shows the viewer an old world and conflict, both of which never perished but rather transformed the country, government, and people perpetually into a contemporary America.

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Individualism and Patriarchy: Revisiting and Overcoming Prejudice in American Education

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In his groundbreaking essay "The American Scholar," Ralph Waldo Emerson, an American Romantic, claims that successful education always features an individualistic approach. Every person must use his own unique character to improve his mind so that he becomes, what Emerson famously termed, a "Man Thinking" (1139). Everyone must work to transform the academic world into a realm that inspires creativity rather than doles out uniform classroom exercises. When learning, people must reject the works of the past because they cause one to live in the past and refuse the future. Emerson's statements lend a revolutionary sentiment to thoughts of what constitutes a triumphant education system, namely the belief that individualism can radically change how the human mind is nurtured and stimulated. Margaret Fuller, one of Emerson's contemporaries and a well-educated individual in her own right, held this belief and expressed it through her works. However, as a woman, she observed the world through a different lens from that of her male counterparts. Though she claimed that women deserve intellectual stimulation just as men do, she also recognized women's difficulty in overcoming certain stereotypes in order to gain that intellectual stimulation. The ideal nineteenth-century American woman was, of course, expected to aspire to domestic rather than intellectual pursuits. She had to participate in activities like sewing and child-rearing rather than writing poetry or reading a newspaper. With her literary and political inclinations, Fuller, along with other female artists during this time, proved to be a shocking oppositional force that challenged traditional notions of what education should provide to men and women while helping to foster a productive blend of intelligence and creativity in America.

Through radical ideas that sometimes acknowledge and appreciate traditions of the home, Fuller makes interesting observations

suggesting that harmony can exist between domesticity and academia. This signifies subversion of patriarchal constructs, and in fact, the last few decades have introduced a multitude of examples that showcase women working hard to accomplish their dreams while navigating through patriarchal obstacles. Academic works such as Jeni Hart's article on feminist scholarship in higher education and different types of media such as the beloved television series *The Golden Girls* and the classic film *Little Miss Sunshine*—all of which this essay will discuss—present contemporary American texts that respond to Emerson and Fuller's thoughts on education. By highlighting and attacking damaging patriarchal constructs, these texts illustrate how women, as scholars, can utilize creativity to courageously subvert these constructs and transform the concept of intellectual improvement. This essay seeks to explore several similarities and differences in how Americans have pondered and approached education since the Age of Romanticism, with the particular goal of conveying how women have defined and continue to define themselves through patriarchal and radical viewpoints of education.

Concerning the world of academics, specifically higher education, Emerson urges the incorporation of individualism into the attainment and application of knowledge. He believes that colleges "have their indispensable office,—to teach elements. But they can only highly serve us, when they aim not to drill, but to create" (1142). From this he asserts that colleges and universities represent wonderful domains for providing a wealth of different subjects to learn about, but in order to be successful, institutions must use these subjects to challenge students to think about the material they are learning in new ways instead of simply regurgitating long-taught information. To have a truly fulfilling academic experience, students must be encouraged to challenge themselves with the knowledge that they gain in college so that they can later confidently apply that knowledge to different areas of society. Jeni Hart agrees with this sentiment when she says, "Scholars—women and men—should be encouraged to speak from a variety of theoretical perspectives and should not fear that their voices will be silenced" (59). Specifically writing about women and feminist scholars through the analysis of three leading academic journals, she declares, "Editors and reviewers should create opportunities for work by and about women in the academy and should seek out

feminist scholars to serve in such roles " (59). Though she acknowledges that more women have recently taken and continue to take a greater interest in higher education, remarking that "more than 50% of all undergraduate students are women and the numbers of women graduate, professional, and doctoral-degree recipients and faculty are increasing," she points out that feminism has often been confined to the margins of academic journalism (40). In order to create a more inclusive society for women in academic research and publication as well as a larger diversity of feminist perspectives in research, she urges members of the higher education community to collaborate with one another so that "there is no longer fear that gendered or feminist work will be devalued or disregarded" (59). In this twenty-first-century American context, then, Hart echoes Emerson's philosophy of individualism in education with a more progressive twist. As the academic realm has increasingly been openly accepting of women in recent decades, this acceptance must continue so that women do not fall back into old patterns of marginalization. Thus, women and feminists deserve to be taken more seriously in higher education so that they may have a greater intellectual outlet to challenge themselves and others with their own unique insights about the world.

Other contemporary American texts, while offering their own support of women's education, have given patriarchal responses to women's desire for intellectual improvement. One such text is the popular television show *The Golden Girls*, which aired from 1985 to 1992. One episode, titled "Adult Education," follows the promiscuous character Blanche as she struggles to pass a college course to obtain her degree. When she voices her concerns to her male professor, he responds by offering to give her a passing grade if she enters into a sexual relationship with him. This episode largely reflects the rhetorical question that Fuller poses in her landmark essay "The Great Lawsuit: Man *versus* Men. Woman *versus* Women," "[When] not one man in the million . . . can rise above the view that woman was made *for man* . . . can we feel that man will always do justice to the interests of woman?" (1644). Because Blanche's educational goals are complicated by her professor's sexual harassment of her, she is subjected to the patriarchal expectation that women will satisfy any demands that men impose on them, even demands of a sexual nature. Fuller's question exposes this expectation as a critical obstacle to women's improvement in any

and all endeavors, not the least of which is education. If a woman's mind is influenced only through lessons of oppressive patriarchal traditions, then she will be less likely to aspire to more innovative and fulfilling pursuits. Thus, Fuller argues that there is no hope of intellectual stimulation for women if selfish patriarchal dominance continues to exist. Blanche, who originally comes from a wealthy, bigoted family in Georgia, represents a product of patriarchal values. However, as a middle-aged, working woman, she actively seeks to gain further and more varied knowledge by attending college. Though she prides herself on giving and receiving sexual pleasure from men, she rejects the advances of her professor because he uses sexual pleasure in order to exploit her as a woman, giving no thought whatsoever to improving her mind. Instead, she works hard to complete the course while refusing to be intimidated by her professor. Indeed, at the end of the episode, she declares, "Maybe [I'm] not the smartest lady in the world, but I do know that my self-respect is more important than passing your damn course" ("Adult Education"). Thus, though this contemporary example does echo some prevailing obstacles to women's education that existed during the American Romantic period, it also highlights that women can and have continued to assert their own demands for a fair and quality education.

On another episode of *The Golden Girls*, titled "Questions and Answers," the book-smart character Dorothy aspires to compete on the national level of *Jeopardy!*, the game show. While studying for the local level of the competition late one night, she falls asleep and dreams of playing on the grand stage on national television. She nearly wins when her sweet but dim-witted friend Rose shockingly overtakes her and claims victory. When she competes at the local level in her town of Miami, Florida, she answers all of the questions correctly with a confident and boastful attitude. However, she is not selected to advance to the national level because the coordinator believes that Americans will view her not as an ordinary citizen trying her hand at a beloved game show and enjoying herself in the process, but as an arrogant competitor obsessed with winning. When Dorothy expresses her disappointment to her mother Sophia, she comforts Dorothy by reminding her that she is a first-generation college graduate in a family of poor immigrants. Of course, this consolation is short-lived when she also reminds her that Dorothy, as a teenager, "got knocked

up in a backseat by a nobody!" ("Questions and Answers") This episode contains some interesting contradictory facets of Dorothy's personality and lifestyle that intertwine with her love of learning. As Dorothy is the show's smartest character in terms of factual information and arguably the one with the most emotional baggage, she epitomizes the perseverance to gain intellectual advancement despite hardships. She does express her educational achievements with a degree of patriarchal arrogance, though, as her competitive nature reveals her determination to dominate all others with her knowledge. The fact that she did become a teenage mother further emphasizes patriarchal control over her intellectual pursuits. She was forced to settle down as a housewife and mother before fully devoting herself to her college studies. Even currently living as a middle-aged, divorced substitute teacher, her achievements are not very glamorous by today's standards. The fact that her own dream does not provide a satisfactory conclusion highlights that her intellectual talents are overshadowed by the patriarchal burdens that she has endured throughout her life. Therefore, Dorothy's struggles with asserting the strength of her mind indicates that patriarchal stereotypes continue to pervade women's strides toward an advanced education in America.

Another contemporary text that examines some of the limiting and progressive strategies toward education is the film *Little Miss Sunshine* (2006), directed by Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris. In the first part of the film, the Hoover family is traveling to California to watch seven-year-old Olive perform in a beauty pageant called Little Miss Sunshine. On the way, they stop at a diner to have breakfast. When Olive orders, she discovers an item on the menu titled *à la mode*, which she does not know signifies that her meal comes with ice cream. Her uncle Frank then proceeds to tell her that *à la mode* is a French term that means "in the fashion." While he explains some of the term's etymology, Olive's father Richard rudely interrupts him and informs Olive that ice cream contains a great amount of fat, which would cause anyone who eats it to become fat. Olive's mother Sheryl intervenes and tells her, "It's okay to be skinny and it's okay to be fat, if that's what you want to be," but Richard persists, asking his daughter, "Are [the competitors in Miss America] skinny or are they fat?" When Olive timidly replies, "They're skinny, I guess," Richard says, "Yeah, guess they don't eat a lot of ice cream" (00:26:15-00:28:07). This

scene demonstrates the oppressive traditions of education that Emerson and other American Romantics fiercely protested. Richard seeks to remind his daughter that she will only be successful in the fashion industry if she adheres to the established rules of that industry. By conditioning her to participate in a world that accepts thin supermodels and rejects overweight hopefuls, he reveals his endorsement of a dichotomous society with discriminatory ideals and he teaches her that they are right. Moreover, his dismissal of Frank's legitimate explanation implies his belief that young girls like Olive should not want to pursue an advanced education but instead should only aspire to the education of exclusive fashion. Thus, the beginning of the film illustrates a clear patriarchal structure of obtaining knowledge.

Toward the end of the film, however, Olive finally defies the patriarchal standards of how a woman should look and act in society, though she initially shows some awkwardness in her defiance. At the opening of the pageant, Olive unceremoniously walks around the stage in a plain, one-piece bathing suit that displays her pudgy midsection, with her hair in a simple ponytail, and barely any makeup, while all of the other contestants wear more revealing suits, elaborate hairstyles, an excessive amount of makeup, and bright smiles as they strut on stage for the judges (01:19:55-01:21:30). This sharp contrast between Olive and her peers emphasizes her first act of defiance to the lessons that most young girls of her age learn about how to present themselves in society. Her hesitant movements as well as her uncertainty of how widely she should smile convey that she knows nothing of the seemingly natural actions that the other contestants have clearly perfected. Therefore, despite the widely accepted knowledge of artificial beauty and behavior that she gains in earlier scenes, her improvisation at the swimsuit competition reveals that she is more comfortable taking a creative, unrehearsed approach to her performance. Certainly, Olive's unconventional performance at the talent competition reinforces this approach. During her routine she strips herself of the clothes that resemble a business suit, revealing only a glittery black tank top and red shorts. To the audience's shock, she proceeds to dance randomly and provocatively as well as run around the stage while making flamboyant gestures, all to the tune of Rick James's raunchy song "Super Freak" (01:30:32-01:34:40). Though she is later disqualified from the pageant and banned

from competing in all other California beauty pageants, Olive proves to be the true winner of the Little Miss Sunshine pageant. Instead of singing a well-rehearsed song or doing a gymnastics routine like her peers, she chooses to incorporate true creativity into her performance by acting in the present moment without any reservations about the reactions of others. Her unusual, but fun, routine resonates through her relaxed smile, as viewers are fully aware of the confidence and joy that she feels when performing for the audience, contrary to her earlier discomfort at the swimsuit competition. This pleasure conveys the American Romantic notion of individualism. As Emerson states, "There are creative manners, there are creative actions, and creative words . . . that is, indicative of no custom or authority, but springing spontaneous from the mind's own sense of good and fair" (1141). Olive undoubtedly exhibits this creative spirit when learning about the true value of beauty and thus foregrounds the freedom from stifling patriarchy that she has obtained at the end of the film.

Clearly, America has undergone quite a few transformations since the Age of Romanticism. We have upheld some traditions that the period established or maintained, we have created new traditions for the current period, and we have modified some of the older habits and ideologies of our ancestors. Education, like any other discipline, shares fundamental connections with every aspect of society, whether it is politics, economics, religion, or psychology. Therefore, it should be treated in a variety of ways. American Romantics certainly held strong opinions about it, which they expressed through lectures, speeches, casual conversations, poetry, essays, and many other outlets. Ultimately, one of the most cherished ideals of the approach to education was individualism, which Emerson professed throughout his long career. Fuller, with her unique female voice, concurred with and countered some of his opinions, claiming that education should be eagerly pursued by everyone, but we must not ignore the powerful sway of long-held prejudices that can hinder our progress. With the advent of film, computers, television, social media, and other innovative technologies, it is more important than ever that the current generation remembers this admonition as they work to improve their minds. Though we seem to have obtained a more collective and fiercer confidence as a nation in the twenty-first century, we still have many obstacles to overcome as we work to decide which

practices to build upon and which ones to reject outright. If we continue to strive for excellence in education, we will not only do our ancestors justice but also feel more accomplished as individuals. Lessons can be learned every single day, and when people take the time to learn in a productive and creative way, they have achieved something amazing every single day, thus proving to be Men and Women Thinking together.

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Misplacing Fear on Rhiannon's Body in the *Maginobi*

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The first branch of the *Mabinogi* shows the Prince of Dyfed—Sage—and the events that result in his marriage to the beautiful and mysterious Rhiannon. Even though the first part of the branch deals with Sage's arrangement to switch lives with Arawn, "a king of the Otherworld," the majority of the branch's conflicts arrive with Rhiannon (*Mabinogi* 190). Rhiannon's beauty immediately draws attention from Sage and his men, but, as hard as they try to reach her on her horse, the men cannot catch up. It is only when Sage "[tries] using his words," and therefore treats Rhiannon as more than a voiceless object, that she acknowledges Sage and his men (*Mabinogi* 194). This event foreshadows the treatment Rhiannon will receive throughout the rest of the story as she marries Sage and gives birth to their son. The author of the *Mabinogi* wrote this Welsh tale during a time of conflict between the Welsh and the Normans, who, Morgan Kay claims, "were eyeing Welsh pastures with greedy eyes, and the Welsh knew just how ruthless those Normans could be when they wanted something" (216). Just as the *Mabinogi*'s author and its Welsh readers would have felt vulnerable from the outsider Normans threatening their lands, Kay suggests the author "dwells on the sadness and destructiveness" of what Rhiannon loses as she transitions to a new sovereign land (221). Rhiannon moves from her land where she holds the power and agency to choose her own husband to Sage's country, where her untraditional femininity sparks fear and suspicion as she pays for others' negligence through a lengthy punishment. The people of Dyfed's actions suggest that they acknowledge Rhiannon's female power in their fear-driven desire to control her. In this way, the characters in the first branch of the *Mabinogi* treat Rhiannon's body as an object on which to make their own marks, effectively using her as a means to express their fears of female expression and power.

Before marrying Sage, Rhiannon holds considerable power over the people around her, but her acceptance of Sage's life and

power leads her to a new land where others no longer value her feminine influence, but fear it, and where people view her as an object. When she first meets Sage, Rhiannon can outrun all of his men on her horse and only acknowledges Sage himself when he alone chooses to use actual language to talk to her. Furthermore, when Rhiannon does acknowledge Sage, she states that her "main errand . . . was to try and see [Sage]," further showing that Rhiannon held complete control over her situation by both allowing Sage to catch up to her and by stating that she sought him out (*Mabinogi* 194). This control puts Rhiannon in a greater position of knowledge and power than her future husband. Later, when Sage visits Rhiannon's kingdom, she provides a plan for the prince to defeat his rival and gain back Rhiannon's hand in marriage. Rhiannon, through a plan of her own making, selects her own path by choosing Sage as her husband, similar to the way she established her position of control at the mound. However, when the newly married couple move to Dyfed, Juliette Wood writes that Rhiannon "seems to become more vulnerable" and her and Sage's "initial roles are reversed" (71). Before her marriage, Rhiannon holds more control over her situations than Sage, which she shows through her broader knowledge of Gwawl's sneakiness and her characterization of the impulsive Sage as an "imbecile" (*Mabinogi* 195). However, in his study of gendered discourse in the *Mabinogi*, Kay claims that, even in these situations back in her own land, Rhiannon "exercises control . . . Yet . . . it is maintained entirely through speaking (223). It is later, when she returns with Sage to his home and she loses much of her power to speak, both in the narrative itself and seemingly in her social interactions, that she becomes subservient to those around her.

Even though Rhiannon tells and instructs Sage in her plan to defeat Gwawl, Kay points out that "she herself plays no active role in the game of badger-in-the-bag that causes his humiliation and surrender" (223). This transitional event shows that Rhiannon's relationship with Sage will change. She goes from completely controlling the way men approach her, and choosing specifically which man she wishes to marry, to handing over her clever plan for her future to Sage. Rhiannon still holds the plan, but Sage places it into action. Even still, Sage and Rhiannon leave for Dyfed in a mutually equal station, as Sage insists that they "'leave together'" after spending the night "in mutually enjoyable and satisfying

ways" (*Mabinogi* 197). However, after ruling Dyfed for only two years, "the people began to obsess over the fact that Sage . . . was still childless" (*Mabinogi* 197). It takes only two years of Rhiannon living as the prince's wife for others to begin viewing her as only a body with which to birth children. Rhiannon's journey from holding power over the men following her and choosing her own husband to her later acceptance of Sage's power and life leads to her slipping into a subservient role. Others now view Rhiannon as an empty body—both literally barren of a child and vacant of symbolic importance—that should not only follow society's expectations for women, but also represent that society's fears about women who exist outside of social norms.

When Sage brings Rhiannon back to his kingdom, Rhiannon's role transitions from an independent woman to a replaceable woman whose body holds a sole responsibility, to give children. Sage's advisors' solution to Rhiannon's problem includes telling Sage to "take another wife who can produce an heir" (*Mabinogi* 197). Sage's friends view Rhiannon as a body for producing a child, no different from any other woman. Rhiannon's role as a foreign wife remains significant in relation to her failure to give children. Her barrenness embodies an excuse stemming from Rhiannon's failure to conform to typical wifehood and, considering that, as Wood's analysis emphasizes, "the accusers emphasize that they are foster-brothers . . . of the husband and in this role . . . [and they] would naturally resent a foreign wife," their accusation narrows further on their fear of a foreigner who has thus far refused to conform totally to society's expectations (68-69). The accusers suggest that Sage choose another, non-foreign wife. Christopher Nugent, in his study of motherhood in the *Mabinogi*, asserts that as the prince's wife, Rhiannon's "public and political role lies precisely in validating and continuing the significance that her husband is thought to embody" (186). The people of Dyfed phrase their complaints about Rhiannon in a way that suggests not that Rhiannon is physically unable to produce a child, but that instead, "it doesn't look like [she] . . . is going to give [Sage] any children" (*Mabinogi* 197). In this way, the men suggest that Rhiannon holds power over her barrenness, and because the prince must have a child, they imply that taking away that power in the form of another wife will solve the problem.

Rhiannon's role in life and her physical body now reflect the role of her husband. Since her husband needs an heir, the people

punish Rhiannon and consider her replaceable since her body has yet to produce a child. However, Nugent claims that, even beyond politics, "a child will integrate [Rhiannon] into the semiotic structure of the society she has entered as a threatening stranger in marriage," suggesting that a baby should not only fulfill her husband's duties, but a baby would also help transform Rhiannon into a less threatening, less foreign woman due to the fact that pregnancy would literally place inside her a member of the Dyfed race (186). The placement of a Dyfed child into this foreign woman reduces her foreignness while also making it obvious that Rhiannon has become a more traditional woman through entering traditional motherhood. By labeling Rhiannon's barrenness as a threat to the future of the kingdom of Dyfed, the men of Dyfed place on Rhiannon's body their fear of women holding power and agency over their own lives and bodies, an autonomy that goes against their society's social norms.

When Rhiannon does provide these men with what they want, and gives birth to a son, she falls asleep after labor and her child disappears, inciting a reaction from her servants that re-establishes Rhiannon's position as a body onto which others place their fears. Instead of taking the blame for the baby's disappearance, the servant women watching over Rhiannon "kill . . . puppies [and] smear the blood on Rhiannon's face and hands . . . and swear she ate the baby" (*Mabinogi* 197). These women use Rhiannon's body as a way to remove their own guilt. Once again, Rhiannon's "female body is made to negotiate personal and public spaces under the specter of violence," as Nugent states (180). Nugent also emphasizes that, in this scene, Rhiannon completely loses the "sole control over her body [that] she [held] when deciding to give herself to [Sage] rather than Gwawl" (190). These servant women, who know that punishment surely waits for them in the form of being "burned alive or executed for losing [the baby]," internalize the misogyny shown by the men towards Rhiannon's foreign barrenness, and they, like Sage's friends, continue using her body as a way to displace their own panic (*Mabinogi* 197). The women smear blood—thought by others to be blood of her son—over Rhiannon's body as a perversion of the effect pregnancy gave to Rhiannon. Now, instead of the Dyfed blood inside her making Rhiannon less foreign, this representation of the same blood labels Rhiannon as a murderer. These women use the same strategy of the men—the placing of

Dyfed blood upon Rhiannon's body—but instead use this tactic to return Rhiannon back to the status of a foreign woman who should be feared.

The women dread the punishment they will receive should Rhiannon wake and find her child missing, so they place the blame on her body so they can avoid reprimand. In doing so, they remove the power of punishment from Rhiannon, who tells the women, "For the love of God who knows everything, *knows* that that's a lie. But if you're afraid, I swear to God I'll protect you" (*Mabinogi* 197). Rhiannon swears to protect these women in her position of influence as Sage's wife, but the women undermine her control by placing evidence upon her body that convinces even Sage that she killed and ate her son. The women remove both Rhiannon's power and influence over Sage's view of her, and her control over her own life. The women responsible for the son's disappearance know that they will escape punishment and defeat Rhiannon's power by placing yet another label upon her body—murdering cannibal. While doing so, however, the women perpetuate the same fear of female power that the men of Dyfed use as rationale for the removal of control from dominant females like Rhiannon.

As punishment for her alleged crime, Rhiannon must sit by the town's mounting-block and tell her story to everyone who does not know it and "offer to carry any guest or traveler to the court on her back," adding yet another physical objectification to Rhiannon's story (*Mabinogi* 198). Again, the people of Dyfed use Rhiannon's body as a way to punish her, and, in turn, express their fears. Now, instead of being a vehicle for a male heir to enter the world, she now becomes an instrument for anyone who wishes to reach her husband's court, even though "people rarely did" take advantage of her position (*Mabinogi* 198). The former symbol of her feminine power—the horse—now becomes a symbol of her oppression. Rhiannon's new role as a "horse" serves as a way to reverse her previous position of power at the mound, and force her to accept upon herself the physical punishment for being a foreign, powerful woman. This downfall towards corporal punishment "focuses almost exclusively on [Rhiannon's body] . . . [and] calls into question cultural norms regarding gender, sexuality, and the exercise of power," as Nugent's analysis points out, suggesting that those around Rhiannon recognize the strength her female, foreign body held in her previous life and therefore use her body

as a way to express their fears about her gender and power (181). Nugent again emphasizes that through her punishment, Rhiannon "effectively rewrites the untrue story of her guilt upon her own body" and removes "any suggestion that her husband may be less than fully potent" (188-189, 182). This re-writing further shows how the Dyfeds use Rhiannon's body as a place for the reduction of their society's fear through its placing of blame on the female form. The Dyfeds' total re-claim of power forces even Rhiannon, who knows her own innocence, to accept punishment upon her body rather than to ineffectively "go on wrangling with the women" (*Mabinogi* 198).

Rhiannon, now barren of any Dyfed blood inside her, becomes threatening again to the people of Dyfed, so they place upon her this physically tolling punishment. However, even after Sage and Rhiannon discover that their son, Carey, did survive and lives with Pendaran of Dyfed, little in the kingdom changes. Sage decides that, even with the punishment the disappearance caused for Rhiannon, Carey would remain with his foster family should "the nobles . . . advise it" (*Mabinogi* 200). These nobles also forced Rhiannon into her servitude, but they give no mention of an apology for Rhiannon's suffering after the discovery of Carey, not even from her husband. The physical punishment forced upon Rhiannon after the misleading disappearance of her son represents the power that the men recognized in Rhiannon before she became a mother. Her loss of the child, both from giving birth from her physical body and then from losing her son to another family, returns Rhiannon to her previous state as a dangerous and powerful foreign woman. However, because no apology or retribution comes after Pendaran reveals the mistake, Rhiannon's body remains objectified and devoid of power. The people of Dyfed set a powerful precedent, proving to both their people and the reader that female power should be feared and physically removed from any woman who displays such threatening autonomy, just as they wrote their fears and punishments upon Rhiannon's body.

From the beginning of the *Mabinogi*, whenever characters give Rhiannon a voice, whether by talking to her instead of chasing her or asking her advice for chasing off a competing suitor, she shows great competence and power. However, when Rhiannon moves with Sage back to Dyfed, Sage returns to his role as prince and Rhiannon becomes a foreign woman whose power and bold-

ness, praised in her own land, become a threat. Rhiannon's body develops into a depository for those around her to throw their fears and trepidations about her foreign female power. The people who fear Rhiannon's power and control over her own life take away her voice, focusing instead their attention and controlling attitudes towards her body. By showing others continuously attacking Rhiannon's body, the author of the first branch of the *Mabinogi* reveals how society misplaces societal fears of women on those same women's bodies, turning them into objects to be manipulated for another's purposes.

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Misogyny and Classism: Resistance and Intervention in M.E. Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*

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According to Phillip Allingham, contributing editor of *The Victorian Web*, Mary Elizabeth Braddon "attack[ed . . .] both smug, middle-class morality and upper-class respectability," for "she revealed the hypocrisy of both governing classes as she attacked their marginalization of women and their social pretensions." In this way, Braddon's writing also reflects Karl Marx's notion that "history is an ongoing class struggle between those who labor and those who own" (Parker 213). Indeed, in *Lady Audley's Secret*, Braddon contributes to the dialectical materialism—the "back and forth of contradictory ideas and class conflict" (Parker 214)—of the Victorian era as she examines the ways in which characters of each gender are interpellated into misogynistic and classist ideologies. Braddon's criticism of these bigoted modes of thinking is manifested primarily by Phoebe and Luke Marks, for these characters showcase the harsh reality of the gendered order and socioeconomic hierarchy: these dominant groups (i.e. the patriarchy and the wealthy elite) maintain their influence and power by obtaining the unconscious consent of the masses, not through violence, but through subtle, recurring means. Braddon thereby anticipates Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony (Parker 218). Moreover, her depiction of these problematic social systems, and her characters' participation in them, reveals the need for readers of her time to challenge these traditional modes of thinking. Thus, as opposed to blindly reproducing and remaining complicit with misogyny and classism, Braddon intervenes with the gendered and economic politics of the Victorian era.

Discontent with the "enforced social situations" that characterized the Victorian period, Braddon uses Phoebe Marks as a means to "challeng[e] assumptions about the feminine" and the lower, working-class, problematic stereotypes that pervaded during Brad-

don's time (Schipper 1). Phoebe showcases the paradoxical, confining nature of idealized feminine gender roles by simultaneously conforming to and undermining stereotypical representations of lower-class women. The ideals of Victorian womanhood, as outlined by John Ruskin in Elisabetta Marino's writing, characterize women as "enduringly, incorruptively good; instinctively, infallibly wise – wise not for self-development, but for self renunciation: wise, not that she may set herself above her husband, but she may never fail from his side" (Marino 15). Thus, according to Ruskin, the fulfillment of "*true* woman[hood]" insists on incorruptible morality, self-rejection, and submissive loyalty as qualities inherent to femininity (Marino 15, my emphasis). Interestingly enough, as a Victorian woman, Phoebe fails to maintain Ruskin's notion of morality, because she—not Luke—initially devises the plan to blackmail Lady Audley in order to obtain the necessary funds to first establish, and then maintain, Mount Stanning Inn. Furthermore, by exploiting Lady Audley, Luke and Phoebe affirm classist stereotypes in which the lower-class is labeled as criminal. They both reject their class-standing and then seek to improve their socioeconomic condition by using Lady Audley's wealth to advance from the servant class to the middle class. In so doing, Phoebe again fails to maintain Ruskin's idealized model of femininity: she ironically exhibits his notion of "self renunciation" while also pursuing (from an economic perspective) the "self-development" of women that Ruskin condemned (Marino 15). Conversely, Phoebe again conforms to Ruskin's ideals by demonstrating his notion of submissive loyalty, because she ultimately chooses to marry Luke in order to maintain her earlier promise to do so, despite her admitted inability to love him. Thus, Ruskin's oversimplified model of the true Victorian woman fails as an ideal for the feminine, for Braddon recognizes that the desire for social and class mobility often conflicted with traditional female gender roles.

Braddon also uses Phoebe as a representation of women's oppression, because Phoebe—like Lady Audley—must employ subversive, criminal behavior in order to achieve some degree of status, verifying the reality of the social and economic limitations that were imposed onto the feminine. Because she exists (fictionally) in a "climate of economic limitations" (Schipper 6), Phoebe's decision to blackmail Lady Audley can then be understood as an attempt to secure her family's future with a stable source of income for her husband. As

scholar Jan Schipper recognizes, Victorian women depended upon either their "fathers, husbands, or fortunes" in order to survive and live comfortably, and without these, women of that time were compelled to sustain themselves financially through "marriage, a scanty subsistence from a job in service, or dependence on the good will of others" (1). As such, Phoebe and Luke together express "relative autonomy" from the classist hierarchy by undermining the authority of the wealthy elite, represented by Lady Audley (Parker 227). Simultaneously, in subverting this hierarchy, Phoebe ironically conforms to the financial dependence and submissiveness characterizing women of that time, because she confirms that she is indeed reliant on her husband's income. Phoebe's relative autonomy hints at the supposed infallibility of misogynist and classist ideologies, suggesting that this temporary resistance to the dominant mode of thinking is not enough to overthrow it. The fact that Phoebe is described in terms of her relation to her superiors, such as Lucy Audley's "lady's maid" and "the innkeeper's wife" (Braddon 254, 256), speaks to Phoebe's oppression at the hands of a male-dominated, classist society. As a fictional female character, Phoebe thereby lacks an identity of her own, confined by social and economic limitations that were delineated by the patriarchal order to perpetuate women's tractability. In this way, both Lady Audley and Phoebe reflect the period's gender and class inequality, for misogynist ideology dictates that a woman will always be considered inferior to her male counterpart, no matter how much affluence or social status she achieves. Moreover, the conclusion to Braddon's novel reinforces this notion of class inequality: Lady Audley—a privileged member of the upper class—is ostracized from society and placed away in a mad house, and then she dies. Thus, she is demonized for her class mobility as well as her transgression of Ruskin's previously discussed model of femininity, yet Phoebe Marks—a lower class individual—remains unmentioned and is forgotten despite her subversive actions, and her fate is excluded from the novel's normative and domestic happy ending. Not only is Phoebe deemed unfit for the upper class's achieved status of being "At Peace" (Braddon 378), Braddon shows that she is also categorized and essentialized based off the marginalized group she belongs to, which is (more specifically) women of the lower class.

Yet a more hopeful significance persists within Braddon's narrative, for Braddon intervenes with and even subverts this fatalistic

message by using Phoebe to satirize Victorian women's submissiveness, as well as the submissiveness of the proletariat to the bourgeoisie. Phoebe's seemingly submissive nature is manifested in the way she opens the door to Lady Audley's chambers: she opens it with "that respectful noiselessness peculiar to a well-bred servant" (Braddon 254). She then affirms her conformity to fulfilling the role of a submissive, dutiful housewife when, upon arriving at Audley Court, she claims, "I didn't come away of my own free will [. . .] I was sent here [by Luke . . .] You can't tell how hard he can be upon me if I go against him" (Braddon 256). The "respectful noiselessness" Phoebe demonstrates in opening a door suggests that the servants, the lower-ranked working-class individuals, are voiceless and overlooked as they fulfill their domestic, everyday tasks that allowed the wealthy, privileged few to enjoy their leisure time, free of work or responsibility. Following Judith Butler's notion that gender is performative (Parker 184), Phoebe then lampoons and even manipulates her role as both a submissive servant and housewife in order to subvert the wealthy elite for her family's financial gain. Moreover, by playing into sociocultural expectations for women (i.e., submissiveness), Braddon—through Phoebe—deliberately constructs an identity of feminine meekness and innocence, a performance that forestalls viewers, whether it be Lady Audley or Braddon's readers, from clearly categorizing Phoebe as corrupt, when she is in fact so. Braddon's specific use of the phrase "well-bred servant" indicates that these socioeconomic, gendered roles are indeed artificial performances that are "inherit[ed] models" of "identity" (Parker 184).

To continue, it is also interesting to note the power dynamic at play between Braddon's characters during Phoebe's visit, made on Luke's behalf, to Audley Court, for both Lady Audley and Luke each signify the dominant groups during the Victorian era: the upper class and the patriarchal order, respectively. Because Luke sends Phoebe to Lady Audley for the purpose of obtaining money for the Marks's rent, it stands to reason that Phoebe then functions as a signifier of reification, yet another Marxist notion. As Parker elucidates, "[R]eification refers to the way that commodification reduces social relations, ideas, and even people to things, thus intensifying alienation" (216). Indeed, Phoebe is reduced to a "thing" in this instance: she is manipulated as a means of defining the exchange of power between the wealthy elite and the patriarchy. Thus, she

serves as a representation of the back and forth between these two governing forces as she mediates between the two. The need for a mediator thereby suggests the exclusive, inaccessible nature of these two dominating groups for women of the lower class. The constructed social hierarchies have no place for this marginalized group, and this exclusion of lower-class women perpetuates the alienation that Karl Marx feared. Yet (as previously discussed) Phoebe plays into her submissiveness and, in effect, her commodification at the hands of both the wealthy elite and the patriarchy in order to benefit herself, and Braddon uses Phoebe's satire of class and gender roles as a realized subversion of classism and misogyny. On the other hand, the fact that Phoebe repeatedly performs the expected roles of her gender and class problematizes her subversion, because, ultimately, she perpetuates these problematic representations of marginalized groups. Through this twofold, paradoxical message, Braddon exposes Phoebe's interpellation into the very social systems that she purports to resist. Thus, Braddon highlights the flaws within the gendered, socioeconomic hierarchy—a system that entails inevitable, unconscious submission—by using her writing as a rhetorical call for action by revealing the need for readers of the Victorian era to challenge and even reject these traditional, bigoted ideologies.

Similarly, Luke Marks, Phoebe's husband, both conforms to and deviates from the gender and class roles outlined by a misogynist, classist society. According to Rachel Heinrichs, who examined masculinity as presented in Braddon's narrative, traditional ideas of manhood—"based on abstract concepts such as honour and inheritance" (103)—were defined by the ruling aristocracy. Thus, masculinity was a "natural and exclusive trait of society's upper echelons" (103). In this way (as Heinrichs recognizes), the dominant, upper class present within *Lady Audley's Secret* is represented by Sir Michael and Robert Audley, as well as by Harcourt and George Talboys, while Luke (in being excluded from the privileged few, due to his lack of wealth and status) represents the lower, working class, a group often stereotyped as criminal. Though Luke lacks the inheritance and family status that distinguished members of the wealthy elite, he subtly demonstrates the honour that marked traditional idealizations of masculinity, for (despite his performance of brutish lower-class stereotypes) he seems to adhere to a kind of moral code. When speaking with Lady Audley, Phoebe describes

Luke as a violent and aggressive figure, claiming that, "[I]t is just such men as he who have decoyed their sweethearts into lonely places and murdered them for being false to their word. When he was a boy he was always violent and revengeful" (Braddon 96). However, Luke later invalidates Phoebe's negative conception of him and even demonstrates a progressive respect for her autonomy when he tells her, "If you didn't want to marry me, you should have told me so. I ain't going to murder you, am I?" (Braddon 100). Readers again encounter Luke's honorable nature when he admits that he nursed and assisted George Talboys after George was pushed down the well by Lady Audley. In this instance, Luke claims that George "had to be cared for like a baby" (Braddon 357), because Luke dresses, dries, washes, and even spoon feeds him. Thus, George's "infantile vulnerability highlights Luke's [selfless] maternal care" (Heinrichs 116). His honour is also evidenced by his willingness to assist George; as Heinrichs notes, Luke "offers his service before George proposes payment" (116). In this way, Luke simultaneously conforms to and subverts stereotypical representations of the lower, working-class man. Though he exhibits honour, a traditional masculine ideal, he also assumes the traditional female gender role by acting as a caretaker and nurturer. Because Luke is able to act in both an ideally masculine and ideally feminine manner, Braddon exposes the Victorian era's problematic conception of gender identity by critiquing its constructed performativity. Braddon more plainly uses Luke as a mouthpiece for her critique of gender roles when Luke asks of Phoebe, "Why can't women dress according to their station? You won't have no silk gowns out of my pocket" (Braddon 100). Here, Braddon once more uses Luke to point to the innate performativity of class and gender identities, for she suggests that male and female gender roles, as well as socioeconomic stereotypes, are indeed like clothing—perhaps even costumes—that can either be assumed or cast off.

Luke also functions as a representation of the lower, working-class's oppression by the way in which he is physically depicted. As Heinrichs asserts, "In her characterization of Luke, Braddon exploits pervasive Victorian stereotypes that figure the working-class male as [. . .] uncouth to the extent of animality" (113). Indeed, Braddon clearly emphasizes Luke's animalistic features when readers are first introduced to him: the narrator describes him as a "big, broad-shouldered, stupid-looking clodhopper," with "bushy

brows" and a "large [. . .] well shaped nose," whose mouth "was coarse in form and animal in expression," concluding that he "was not unlike one of the stout oxen grazing in the meadows round about [Audley] Court" (Braddon 28). By characterizing Luke in such a way, it would seem that Braddon initially fulfills the class stereotypes of her time and, thus, she caters to the expectations of her middle- and upper-class readers. However, because she draws a parallel between Luke and the "stout oxen" of Audley Court, Braddon undermines bigoted social and class stereotypes by suggesting that, like these large farm animals, Luke's proletarian industry is able to be exploited and manipulated by the bourgeoisie for profit. Thus, Braddon actually exposes and critiques the problematic power dynamic of her time between the wealthy elite and the lower, working-class, for she reveals that the labors of the proletariat are overly abused by the privileged upper classes.

Moreover, Luke's disadvantaged position as a member of the lower, working-class, combined with his privileged social position as a male, is used by Braddon to depict his interpellation into classist and misogynist ideologies. As Braddon's text showcases, by imposing a less-than-flattering constructed identity onto the proletariat, thereby marginalizing and essentializing this group by supposing that members of the lower class are all idiotic criminals, the bourgeoisie and wealthy aristocracy upheld not only their privileged social status, but also their hegemony. According to Antonio Gramsci, hegemony is maintained "not so much by violence or coercion," but rather through "[cultural] leadership that won the seemingly spontaneous consent of the masses": the upper class's "cultural prestige" disguises their constructed, limiting class and gender roles as "common sense to the masses"; thus, the lower class masses "come to identify with bourgeois ways of thinking, leading them to consent to bourgeois dominance" (Parker 218). Following Gramsci's notions, Luke and Phoebe Marks then verify their interpellation into classist modes of thinking. They believe that they are benefitting themselves by blackmailing Lady Audley—thus subverting the socioeconomic order—but, ultimately, their desire to improve their social and financial position is grounded in a "capitalist ideology that deters revolutionary consciousness" (Parker 219). In other words, because Luke focuses on navigating and improving his own status within the classist hierarchy, he fails to notice the ways in which he is slighted by this very order,

as well as by the patriarchal order. As these two social systems dictate, because Luke is a male who transcends from the servant class to the seemingly "self-sustaining" middle class, he should be in an empowered, privileged social position, dominating over women and members of the lower class. Yet Braddon, as well as her readers, know this is not the case, because Luke is continually looked down upon by Lady Audley, who describes Luke as an "awkward, ugly creature" and treats him as if he were "a dog she couldn't abide the sight on" (Braddon 96, 367). Ironically, Lady Audley, like Phoebe and Luke, used criminal, manipulative means to improve her class standing, and yet "[t]here was no toss as she could give her head that was too proud and scornful for [Luke]" (Braddon 367). As previously discussed, misogynist ideology insists that women, such as Phoebe and Lady Audley, will never achieve the privileged social status retained by men. Yet, as evidenced by her mistreatment of Luke, Lady Audley seems to disregard the codes and conventions dictated by the patriarchal order, instead embracing classist principles in order to undermine Luke's male authority. Thus, Braddon suggests that the problematic reality of classism and misogyny persists: despite the fact that these systems actually disadvantage and even oppress the people that they purport to privilege, members of society continually uphold these faulty social hierarchies with little to no resistance, which attests to Victorian culture's mass interpellation into classist, sexist ideologies.

In this way, Mary Elizabeth Braddon utilizes *Lady Audley's Secret* to bitingly criticize classist and misogynist ideologies. Through Phoebe and Luke Marks, Braddon exposes the flaws inherent to social systems built upon class and gender discrimination. More specifically, Braddon uses Phoebe as a representation of female oppression at the hands of the patriarchal order, while Luke is similarly utilized to represent the less-often-recognized oppression of men. By presenting characters to her readers that both conform to and subvert stereotypical representations of their respective gender and class, Braddon points to the performativity and constructed nature of both gender and socioeconomic roles. Moreover, Braddon proves that members of society unknowingly and unconsciously perpetuate these problematic social systems because they are led to believe, through their unconscious consent to the dominant groups, that their subversion of these bigoted social systems are expressions of their own individualities. However, these social

and cultural modes of thinking—in reality—are merely perpetuated. By depicting Phoebe and Luke as "subjects of interpellation" (Parker 224), Braddon thus actively intervenes with the gender and social politics of the Victorian era, for she recognizes the need for social reformation and encourages her readers to reject these bigoted modes of thinking. Therefore, her text "both inform[s] and reform[s]" (Schipper i).

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Hero and Heroine: Changing Archetypes from Odysseus to Katniss

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Stories of knights clad in shiny armor battling dragons, men of impossible strength defeating mythical opponents, or quests undertaken to save home and country are how we have defined heroes since ancient times. Heroes have entranced humankind's collective consciousness since before recorded history. Oral histories were used to relay the journeys of Odysseus, Hercules, and Jason, and in each were certain similar qualities that defined them as heroes. This paper will examine the transition from an age of male-dominated literary heroes in which the overwhelmingly male hero excelled in battle and returned home to in glory to the recent trend of male characters with glaring weaknesses and women adopting roles traditionally performed by men. First, with authors such as Homer and Virgil, stories were usually centered on men and the journeys were consistent with the societal norms of the time involving women and war. Looking at contemporary literature in comparison, the quest narrative has changed to reflect the more realistic expectation we have of heroic figures. The archetype of a hero has changed significantly since the time of a hero like Odysseus. No longer is the hero required to be royal, divine by birth, or even a male at all, and the need for realism in fiction has seen a push for heroes that have flaws and are not born out of special circumstances. Katniss Everdeen is a girl, born into abject poverty, who goes on to perform heroic acts on a quest to change an oppressive regime. This paper will examine the role of "the hero" in literature and how the hero archetype has evolved from Odysseus to Katniss.

The "hero's journey," or monomyth, is a cyclical journey or quest undertaken by a mythical hero. Legendary adventures of mythical figures all over the world can be connected to the monomyth. The aspects of the hero's journey are prevalent in the most famous classical heroes, from Perseus and Odysseus to Osiris and Samson. In Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, the hero's

journey is detailed using the term "archetype" to describe the different elements it entails. The word archetype is based in the Greek *archē*, which means "beginning," and *typos*, which means, "imprint." Northrop Frye, in his book *The Anatomy of Criticisms: Four Essays*, defines archetype as a "typical or recurring image. . . which connects one poem with another and thereby helps to unify and integrate our literary experience" (Frye 99). These heroes have common elements that, when put together, compose the hero archetype. In all regions of the world, the similar qualities of heroes are attributed to the idea that the hero archetype is an extension of our subconscious, humankind's collective desire for self-knowledge.

The metaphorical search for knowledge leads the hero on a journey and ends with a resolution that imbues the hero with a supernatural wisdom gained from their journey. Campbell, using examples collected from mythologies from around the world, explains that the journey begins in the ordinary world and leads to the special world. On the journey, the hero meets archetypal characters that help or hinder the quest. A central figure is the mentor archetype, or what Campbell calls, the "supernatural aid" (*The Hero* 69) that guides the hero on his journey. This help is seen as supernatural because the mentor has access to powers that the hero is unable to commune with and is usually the one that introduces the hero to the idea of the quest. While on the journey, the quest eventually leads to a resolution that sees the hero become the victor in face of the odds or fail in his objective. There are a variety of resolutions that can occur and they all depend on the initial trajectory of the hero's journey.

Women are often overlooked as part of the hero's journey, partly because the hero has overwhelmingly been a male character. While Campbell has made the hero's journey a well-known archetype, Maureen Murdock, author of *The Heroine's Journey*, has done much to shine that same light on the heroine's journey. In her book, Murdock explains how the heroine's journey is a separate entity from the hero's journey. Not only is the path different, but also the goals are exceedingly distinct from each other. The transition from heroes to heroines is a change that is seen in the difference between Odysseus of *The Odyssey* (circa 800 B.C.) to Katniss Everdeen of *The Hunger Games* (2008). Odysseus is a classical archetype of a hero: male, royal, and of a divine lineage. However, Katniss represents a more modern take on the hero archetype, as she is female,

and has no special circumstances surrounding her birth,nor is she descended from an important figure.

The hero archetype appears in many different cultures and religions, sharing notable qualities between them. While the term "hero" is often taken to mean the good guy who conflicts with the villain, it is simply another term for the protagonist. As an archetype, the hero is meant to symbolize people around the world. Slaying dragons, venturing into unknown realms, overcoming personal demons; these events are meant to symbolize the journeys that a person would go through in their lives. The qualities of the "hero" are comparable in regions all over the world. Lord Raglan, known for his book *The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth, and Drama*, describes the twenty-two qualities heroes have in common and developed a system that identified patterns shared by heroes. These examples include: "mother is a royal virgin,' "reared by foster-parents in a far country," and "achieves a victory over the king and/or a giant, dragon, or wild beast" (Frye 138). Raglan uses well-known mythical heroes as examples to tally points based on how many of the different traits they possess: Theseus scored twenty, biblical Moses scored twenty, and King Arthur of Camelot scored nineteen. The milestones reached in order to achieve high scores were all attained on their own journeys which brought them through the archetypal elements of the "Hero's Journey." The journey of the hero is a narrative structure that is repeated throughout the world. The journey, along with archetypes, allows us to connect ideas and stories together across cultures.

There are many elements of the hero's journey; however, the most common are imagined as a cycle. Campbell explains that it begins with the hero living in the ordinary world before he receives a "call to adventure" (*The Hero* 49). The "refusal of the call" (*The Hero* 59) is a common action during which the hero hesitates out of fear, responsibility, or insecurity. At this point the hero meets a mentor who will be his guide to the special world. Before leaving the "ordinary world," the hero must first overcome the first "threshold guardian" (*The Hero* 77). This guardian symbolizes the boundary between the life that the hero led before answering the "call to adventure" (*The Hero* 49) and the life he wishes to lead by continuing on his adventure. The next step on the hero's journey is the "road of trials." These trials are done with the goal of preparing the hero for the task ahead of him. These tasks lead to the event of

apostasis. This is the hero's physical or spiritual death. Unable to overcome the obstacle in his current state, the hero must be reborn. This manifests in some characters as a flaw of overconfidence or misunderstanding the spiritual side of the training. Depending on the trajectory, the hero is reborn and continues on to his goal, "the ultimate boon" (*The Hero* 172). After completing his task, the hero than returns home. He "crosses the return threshold" (*The Hero* 217), the hero is back in the "ordinary world" and now lives with the knowledge of what he has accomplished. This new sense of self is the "freedom from death." This does not mean that the hero is immortal but that the hero no longer fears death. Campbell calls this "master of two worlds" (*The Hero* 229). He has conquered the special world and uses this new self-recognition to overcome the flaws he had held before the "call to adventure."

Whilst there is a simple path for the hero's journey, there are varying trajectories that the story can take. In Frye's study, he divides these trajectories into models that correlate to the seasons of the year. The imagery of the seasons is a powerful symbol that corresponds to the level of activity of the hero. Even though they are comparable to the seasons, an individual story does not traverse between the different mythos. A journey that follows the mythos of a season stays in that season. For instance, the "Mythos of Summer," which Frye labels as the season of romance, is the journey about the birth of the hero. It features a redeeming hero who, in Frye's words, "delivers us by killing the leviathan, he releases us" (Frye 190). This epitomizes the idea of summer, the warmest season, as it the ultimate victory over the frost and lack of sunlight during the winter. Stories that follow this mythos often use romantic archetypes to express the conflict of the protagonist and antagonist.

The Odyssey picks up ten years after the Trojan War, when Odysseus finds himself held captive on Ogygia and expressing his desire to return home. In essence a prisoner for seven years, Odysseus is finally granted release when his great-grandfather, the messenger god Hermes, by order of Zeus, commands that he be let go after consulting with Athena. Athena fulfills the role of the mentor or "supernatural aid" as Campbell would have called her. Poseidon seizes his chance and wrecks the raft Odysseus sails on. After recovering from the storm, Odysseus finds himself on Scherie, home of the Phaeacians. After revealing his identity, Odysseus tells the

tale of how he came to be shipwrecked at the home of his hosts. He recounts the journey he has traveled and relives his encounter with a cyclops, the hatred Poseidon now bears for him, Circe, the cattle of Helios and then his captivity by Calypso, describing the "road of trials" that he has traveled. The Phaeacians smuggle him back to Ithaca, "the ultimate boon" that Campbell has described when Odysseus has finally achieved his goal. Disguised by Athena, he reveals himself only to his son and together they plan to kill the suitors. After winning an archery contest, Odysseus reveals himself to the suitors. After slaughtering the suitors and killing all those he thinks have betrayed him, Odysseus then finally meets his wife and recounts his adventure. Odysseus ends *The Odyssey* with his obtaining "the ultimate boon" and resuming his life on Ithaca.

While Campbell's work has been used to compare and contrast literary works using archetypes, he agrees that there is a large gap in the significance awarded to the role women play in the hero's journey. Campbell makes a comment about this himself when asked about the predominantly male point of view in ancient mythologies. He suggests that the stories that made heroes famous were told predominantly by men and that " . . . women were too busy, they had too damn much to do to sit around thinking about stories" (*Pathways to Bliss* 145). With this quote, Campbell claims that the discrepancy in the participants of the journey is affected, largely, by the gender norms of the time. In her work *From Girl to Goddess: The Heroine's Journey Through Myth and Legend*, Valerie Frankel addresses these gaps and uses the opportunity to educate the reader of the presence of the heroine archetype.

Even though Frankel does not invent the "Heroine" archetype, she explains its role in storytelling. If the hero archetype is defined by his role of trying to master two worlds, then the heroine archetype can be defined by her journey to find balance. In order to understand why the character would need to achieve balance, the reader must understand the heroine's journey and the sides of the heroine that are in conflict. Frankel explains that when the story begins, the heroine rejects her "feminine self" (Frankel 22), which she thinks is holding her back from achieving her goals. According to Frankel, the heroine deems it as weak and tries to seek out a guide in order to learn how to use her "masculine side" (Frankel 22), the side that bestows physical strength or aggressive behavior. After a catastrophic failure brought about by overconfidence in

her abilities, the heroine reconnects to the feminine side and uses the balance of the nurturing and caring, feminine side with the aggressive, masculine side. This balance is the goal and makes the heroine into the "Great Mother."

The "Great Mother" (Frankel 4) is the archetype that can bring her world into balance. This balance can be found either in the heroine or in her surrounding environment. The focus on the heroine's role to balance situations can be seen as the mother's role of stabilizing the family in the home. While Odysseus and his story in *The Odyssey* are notable examples of the hero's journey, his wife Penelope exemplifies the heroine's journey. Frankel explains in the introduction of her book that Penelope's journey happened alongside her husband's and son's: "In *The Odyssey*, you'll see three journeys," she goes on to explain the journey Odysseus goes on to return home and how his son, Telemachus, embarks on his own in search of his father, but "the third is of Penelope herself, whose journey is . . . endurance" (*Pathways* 159). Frankel asserts that while her husband and son set sail on the quests, "Penelope outwits suitors with her weaving for twenty years, all the while maintaining her faith and chastity and protecting her son and island" (Frankel 4). Penelope's own story qualifies her as a classical heroine whose own journey of balance and nurturing coincide with her husband's quest to master his special world. However, it is her classical heroine status that shows how the term "heroine" has changed over the course of history and implies a different meaning to contemporary readers.

The effects of the gender norms of the past have not only affected the prevalence of heroines in stories, but it has also affected how the readers view the heroine archetype. In classical times, a man could only undertake the hero's journey because it would have been seen as strange for a woman to be independent and try to assume mastery over her surroundings. In modern times, the term "heroine" does not apply to a protagonist on the heroine's journey, but to a female protagonist on the hero's journey. Contemporary readers use the heroine archetype as a general term to describe any female protagonist, but there are other terms that can apply. Upon closer inspection, modern female protagonists do not fall under the definition of a heroine but, rather, as a warrior woman/maiden. Unlike the heroine archetype, Frankel's introduction of a warrior woman/maiden is a far cry from the heroine archetype that classical

stories have used in the past. The warrior woman/maiden archetype is a different class of female protagonists than the heroine. While the heroine wishes to achieve balance within herself and reconcile the different ideals of her personality, the warrior woman/maiden's desire lines up more readily with the hero archetype. It is not about balance in oneself but about mastery over others. Heroines, when used in modern vernacular, refer to women who go on a journey in order to achieve a status or in search for a prize. The integration of women into a predominantly male story archetype is a result of society's movement towards sexual equality. A famous modern character that exemplifies these qualities is Katniss Everdeen. Her journey is not about achieving balance but, rather, a mastery of her own world.

In Katniss, we see a departure from the tough, jaded female protagonists that ruled the genre, to a more innocent character that has been hardened by the harsh realities of life but is not cold and unfeeling. While the woman warrior is more realistic and seems to be more desirable to read about than her flat predecessor, both of them are still held in higher regard than the classic "damsel in distress" role that the critically panned and equally famous character, Bella Swan from *Twilight,* seems to be. Kathi Maio of *Fantasy & Science Fiction Magazine* writes that she found Bella "to be as limp and uninteresting a female protagonist as I could ever remember." The notion of having a protagonist that was willing to sit back and let others handle things for her while she wallowed in self-pity was unappealing to a modern crowd. Although the movies did well commercially, the character of Bella Swan has been almost universally condemned as a flat personality. It is, however, the gritty realism of Katniss' character has struck a chord with fans, both commercially and critically. It is her avoidance of romantic entanglements and the modern attitude of not looking for a savior that allows her to be embraced by fans.

Indeed, *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins tells of a different kind of hero and her journey to pass through an unknown world and emerge from the other side victorious. Katniss Everdeen's story is told over a trilogy of books, each with their own plot and resolution. It is, however, the resolution to the main arc that stretches the trilogy that contains the key elements that deals with the hero's journey. Born years after a major war in which Katniss' people are forced to offer reparations in the form of child

tributes, she is thrust into the light from obscurity. Katniss' "call to action" occurs when her younger sister, Primrose, is selected to participate in a gladiator-style match, which pits children against each other. Here she meets Abner Haymitch, who plays the role of mentor for tributes from District 12. Katniss volunteers herself as a replacement and this begins her own hero's journey into the "special world" of the games. After manipulating the games so that both she and her friend, Peeta of District 12, both win the games, she is visited by the ruling president of Panem. President Snow demands that she showcases herself as a silly girl and not as a symbol that can be used to foment rebellion.

Comparing Katniss and Odysseus may seem like a stretch for some, but the connections these two characters share are evident, even in the face of the almost three millennia gap. A major unifying theme between the two characters is their reluctance to leave their homes and pursue glory in places far from their loved ones. Odysseus' own desire to remain on the island of Ithaca is emphasized in literary work done by Pseudo-Apollodorus and Hyginus, written much later than the original works by Homer, that tell of the time before *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. In it, Odysseus tried to remain out of the Trojan War and feigns madness when visited by agents of Menelaus and Agamemnon. To see past this trick, Odysseus' son is placed in front of the plough. Odysseus, seeing that his son was in danger, quickly leapt forward to save him and reveals his lack of insanity. This forces him to fight in the Trojan War. Even though the circumstances are slightly different, the theme is the same for Katniss. When her sister is placed in danger when she is chosen as a tribute, Katniss is forced to volunteer herself in order to save Prim a trip to a battle arena. Her volunteering to participate is analogous to the way that Odysseus is forced to come forth and reveal himself.

While Odysseus and Katniss are both sincere in their desire to remain in obscurity, once on their journey, their main goal is to return home. Although their concepts of home are different, Katniss and Odysseus both share the idea of *nostos*. The literal definition of *nostos* is "homecoming." Its usage is much broader and is a great way to describe the feeling of a character that wishes to return home after a long journey. The root of the word, "nostalgia," *nostos* is felt by both Katniss and Odysseus and seen several times throughout their stories. At the beginning of *The Odyssey*, Odysseus laments

on his inability to return home and be with his family. Similarly, Katniss does this at the end of her first Hunger Games when she wishes for things to return to how they were before Prim was picked as a tribute.

Katniss and Odysseus' similarities do not end at their motivations, but can be seen in how they conduct themselves in battle. Both Katniss and Odysseus tend to employ their wits instead of any physical strength either of them may have. Odysseus showcases this quality several times throughout his journey. The strongest example is his encounter with Polyphemus while he is trapped inside the Cyclops' cave. Foregoing open battle against a superior opponent, Odysseus devises a plan to blind and trick Polyphemus so that the Cyclops was unable to call for help, all the while calling himself "Nobody" (Homer 147) so that Polyphemus' rantings are misunderstood by his fellow cyclopes. Katniss does the same when she is in her first Hunger Games and encounters life or death situations for the first time. Rather than engage superior opponents in open combat, she evades and uses her surroundings in order to defend herself. This similarity manifests in another way. Both of the character's fondness for archery can be symbolic of their preference not to be involved in close quarters combat, further proof of their propensity to use their wits and not choosing to match their strength against opponents.

While the similarities between the two are many, so too are the differences. The most glaring difference is the circumstances of their lives and the significance each of them had before their journeys began. In his book, Campbell explains the need ancient storytellers had when imagining a hero: "The makers of legend have seldom rested content to regard the world's great heroes as mere human beings who broke past the horizons that limited their fellows and returned with such boon as any man with equal faith and courage might have found" (*The Hero* 319). The storytellers believed that heroes could not be just anyone who pushed himself, but rather needed to believe that these heroes had been destined since birth to do incredible things. Hercules, Perseus, and even Odysseus were the progeny of gods. The defining quality in Katniss and other heroes of her time are the humble beginnings that they share.

The second distinction is much more existential than their places in the world. A major disparity between Odysseus and Katniss is the reward they wish to receive after their quests are over. *The Odys-*

sey is a tale about one man and his quest to return to his kingdom. Odysseus' only thoughts are for his physical return to his family at which he believes that he will be able to correct any outstanding needs that require his attention. This need to be present in a place he has been absent from for years is vastly different than Katniss' need. Unlike Odysseus, Katniss visits her home several times during her journey. Her wish to return to an earlier time, a simpler time, is what drives her. Her need is not a physical return to her home but to recapture the obscurity and relative safety that she once found in her family.

The fact that Katniss' journey takes on a very different path than Odysseus' can be attributed to the historical context in which they were both first created. During the time of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, the written word was almost inaccessible to the general populace. Stories and myths like those texts were passed down through oral tradition, and oral tradition, by its nature, is episodic. Each part of the story could be told separately and without a need to be resolved. Oral narratives were not developed with an emphasis on accuracy, but, rather, with a focus of mnemonic devices that help the teller remember important pieces of the story. Katniss' story, on the other hand, was written during a time when young adult novels were at their most popular. Modern audiences enjoy a finished story, an ending that gives closure. The medium and time in which *The Hunger Games* was first printed determined how the story progressed.

It is because of its episodic nature that *The Odyssey* does not lend itself to a very definitive resolution. Compared to modern stories that end with either the hero riding off into the sunset after defeating the great evil, or the world moving on without the hero after losing in battle, ancient tales were often told in non-consecutive chapters by elders or parents. Using Odysseus as an example, the reader can see that there are isolated adventures during his journey. The fact that the story of Polyphemus could be told independently of Odysseus' adventure with Circe is an effect of the episodic nature of oral traditions. Bruce Rosenberg's article, "The Complexity of Oral Tradition," published in *Oral Tradition Journal,* describes the flow of an oral narrative. He said that "oral narratives do not begin or end abruptly" (86). This can mean that an episodic story like *The Odyssey* fulfills the needs of the reader because it is not definite in the conclusion and teases future adventures.

The Hunger Games is an example of a genre of literature from which audiences demand closure in order to be satisfied with the arc of the story because this story is not passed down through generations, but instead purchased with the intention of immediate consumption. Peter Brooks, in his book *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, explains that the narrative of a story is driven by human desire. The compulsion for closure favors endings that tie up the storyline and brings some measure of resolution. However, the natural order of a narrative is not to end but, rather, to keep working towards a satisfying ending "but can never quite get to the point" (Brooks 61). Whether the protagonist succeeds or fails in their quest, the storyline reaches a climax and then an ending that deals with the consequences of the journey. Brooks tells us that the natural progression of a narrative is to never end and this is in direct contradiction to the contemporary need for a clear ending. The human desire to continue the story can only lead to resolutions in modern tellings of the hero's journey that do not feel natural and leave the reader less than fulfilled.

It is the trauma suffered at the end of their journeys that defines *The Hunger Games* and *The Odyssey's* extraordinarily contrasting resolutions. During the time of *The Odyssey*, the idea of battle and war was commonplace. Warring nation states battled for trade routes, resources, and regional supremacy, and societies like this glorified soldiers because battle was paramount to survival. The glory of war helped those affected by it readjust to life outside of war. The stigma of bloodshed was not as troubling an issue as it is today. Odysseus returns home after his journey and kills his wife's suitors and the servants he deems traitorous. After decades away from his family, Odysseus does not pause in his killing of several more people, including those that have served his family and seems to be unaffected by it when the journey has come to an end. After reconnecting with his wife, he tells his story and Odysseus lives in relative peace during his life, untouched by the trauma his travels should have inspired. This is a very different case for modern times.

The path of a soldier is, in most parts of the world, a choice to be made by an individual. Katniss lives in a time where warfare is no longer the norm, but she is forced against her will to participate in gladiator-type games and a larger war. At the end of *The Hunger Games*, Katniss suffers from PTSD and is physically disfigured. The lasting effects of her ordeals are a step forward in realism and

shows the consequences that she will have to deal with the rest of her life. Katniss does not move on quickly from the ordeals she has been put through, and instead lingers on the loved ones she has lost and the atrocities she has been forced to commit. These effects are clear in the depression she slips into and the restlessness she has upon returning home without the prize she had set out to protect, her sister, Prim. The change of the attitude towards war is one of many important examples of the changes that the hero has faced in the time since Odysseus.

Whether it is the nature of their opponents, the circumstance of their birth, or the identity of the hero, the evolution of the hero archetype and the differences between classical heroes and modern heroes are clear. No longer is the special circumstance of birth a requisite to being a hero. During the time of *The Odyssey*, Katniss would not have been a hero worthy of a quest narrative. As a woman and a member of the lower class, Katniss' story would not have been compelling to readers. It is only recently that her role as a warrior woman has been found to be appealing. Effort and merit did not mold a desirable protagonist for a society that valued inherent importance, but the values have changed and underdogs are celebrated in their victories over stronger, more powerful opponents. If she were compared with other heroes, her determination and perseverance to defeat an overwhelming evil would have earned her a place in the pantheon, but her gender coupled with the fact that she was born into a poor family without any special abilities or venerated family name of her own would have made her an irrelevant character in the story.

A key cause in the fundamental shift of the identity of the antagonist in the hero's journey is increased globalization. Campbell quotes Friedrich Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* to succinctly relay the new world of the hero: "Dead are all the gods" (qtd. *The Hero,* 387). Homer lived in a time when believing in the supernatural was not only common but expected. As the world shrunk in the face of colonialism and global trade, so too did the mystery that it once held. We no longer look to the heavens above for our heroes or fear demons that pull themselves from the dark places beneath us. The modern hero's journey is predicated on battling the darkness in all of us with just our own moral compass as a weapon. Frye tells us that even though their may not be any supernatural forces in the story, the closer it is to the romance myth; "the more attributes of

divinity will cling to the hero and the more the enemy will take on demonic mythical qualities" (Frye 187). While Katniss possesses qualities of a hero such as bravery, determination, and self-sacrifice, Katniss battles President Snow, an insidious man that rules Panem with absolute authority and no conscience. Snow's physical appearance is compared to a snake and the blood that leaks from his mouth after a botched assassination attempt lets him exude a hellish quality. The need for an enemy to possess these traits means that society has not abandoned the underlying notion of the purity of the hero's journey, but has matured enough to see that we are capable of both good and evil and do not need mythical beings to be these things for us.

The archetype of the "warrior woman" has usurped the name of the heroine and completely rewritten the definition. The inclusion of heroes like Katniss Everdeen and Frodo Baggins, who do not have any special powers, but nevertheless push through perilous journeys against much stronger enemies is an excellent example of the everyman's rising popularity. On the other side, it is the prevalence of enemies like President Snow and Lord Voldemort, two men that possess amazing power and demonic qualities, but are still men and embody the worst that humanity has to offer. The lack of supernatural enemies even in the presence of the superhuman abilities is a great difference between classical heroes and modern heroes. These modern heroes have also experienced much more realistic journeys than their classical counterparts. The effect of the journey and the hero's reaction to it is a telling distinction between classical heroes and modern heroes. The horrors of PTSD, depression, and the realistic loss of loved ones affect modern heroes more than they have classical heroes.

Campbell predicted the trend of flawed heroes and the emergence of realistic consequences of the hero's journey. He specifically explained the uncertainty felt in ancient times and how its absence would affect the way the world would look to explain the tendencies for both great nobility and great horror committed by humankind. The definitions he provided for the hero and his journey in the 1960s can be applied to the newly redefined heroine and continues to be relevant to this day. However, Campbell and Frye do not say much about the future of the hero. While the underdog story is popular now, no one knows what the next generation of heroes will look like. Heroism as a whole has changed and this

change is a product of the circumstances of the disillusionment that pervades society. Modern audiences have dictated their preferences for those they wish to celebrate and the romantic view of heroism has fallen by the wayside.

Some may say that we are in a post-romantic time and that the age of heroes is over, and while the evidence does support the notion that romanticism is gone, this line of thinking seems to narrow the definition of a hero to its classical form and ignores its broader concepts. While it is true that the age of the classical hero has surely come to an end, the popularity of the everyman continues to grow. Campbell was right when he said that ancient storytellers wanted a hero that people could admire, an unattainable goal that could only be reached by the divine. However, the modern hero does not gather admiration but, rather, inspires others with their acts of heroism. Contemporary heroes, like Katniss, show that it is not the privilege that she was born with that allowed her to succeed, but her integrity and nobility of character. The notion that anyone can be a hero is a far cry from the elitist mindset that a hero was born and not made, which used to determine the definition of a hero. Inversely, the evils we must now battle are not devils from the deep that do battle with heroes but, rather, other aspects of humankind.

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Cyborgs and Consumerist Monstrosity in M.T. Anderson's *Feed*

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M.T. Anderson's young adult novel *Feed* illustrates a dystopian America in which a technological device implanted into human brains allows corporations to control consumer impulses through a constant projection of advertisements and currently trending merchandise. The feed exists as a brain enhancement typically grafted to the organ at birth and allows continuous access to the internet, television shows, advertisements, and m-chats (a telepathic way to communicate with others who also have the feed). The feed tracks each person's browsing and shopping history which allows corporations to create consumer profiles for every person with the feed and further targets them based on their personal interests. The perpetual flow of information into their brains ultimately dehumanizes the people within Anderson's novel as they lose the ability to think for themselves. While several people within this society view the feed as an enhancement to their lives, the limited brain activity of the cyborgs in combination with the corporation's ability to manipulate that lack of autonomy represents consumerist monstrosity as it brings about mindless consumption and reinforces the class constructs that already exist. The novel, published in 2002, follows a group of adolescents as their dependence on the technology grows stronger which, horrifyingly, parallels with today's prevalent anxiety of smartphone separation. However, the protagonist, Titus, meets a rebelious young girl, Violet, who challenges him to think independently. Written in Titus's perspective, *Feed* illustrates his relationship with Violet as she strives to reveal the frightening vulnerability of surrendering the mind that relies too heavily on technology.

As liminal beings defy categorization, they are often seen as problematic creatures that pose dangers to the spaces in which they live. Jeffrey Cohen defines monsters as liminal beings that "are disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration. And so

the monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions" (6). Originally, these liminal beings consisted of zombies, centaurs, and gorgons, but technological and scientific advances now prompt new liminal beings in the forms of cyborgs and posthumans. Stephen T. Asma explains how these advances allow a further hazing of the distinction between people and creatures: "We now live in an unprecedented technological era that allows us to engineer many more boundary crossings than we ever imagined… The human body has become more plastic and open to manipulation than ever before" (269). Although Anderson never directly references his characters as cyborgs, the characters call each other "unit" or "unette" depending on their gender. According to Clare Bradford, this classification "signals how individuals are envisaged by FeedTech Corp: as revenue-generating components in a global economy" (130). Those in the novel who have the feed categorize as cyborgs due to the feed's enhancement of their abilities. Titus, the narrator of the novel, believes the feed exists solely as an enhancement primarily because he cannot imagine life without the feed. He claims that "one of the great things about the feed [is] that you can be supersmart without ever working. Everyone is supersmart now" (Anderson 47). As the implantation allows everyone with the feed easy access to limitless information, the people within this society fail to retain information, and they rely on the feed. Considering most with the feed receive it before much brain development, the invasion of the feed becomes problematic as it essentially replaces the brain as a functioning organ.

However, the feed originally existed as a removeable and much less invasive machine which suggests its gradual control over society and warns against the potential dangers of technological reliance. For example, Violet's father, a professor striving to preserve the "dead languages," chooses to not have the feed implantation partially because he cannot afford it but largely because he opposes it morally. Instead, he occasionally uses one of the oldest feed models: "His back honestly had a big hunch, which was from a really, really early feedscanner, from back when they wore them in a big backpack on their back, with special glasses that had foldout screens on either side of your eyes" (Anderson 135). Violet's father's ability to easily remove his feed whenever he desires allows him more control over the feed's intrusion. Although the novel does not illustrate the transition between the backpack and brain

chip models, the society gradually became more dependent on this technology which leads to the feed's permeant implantation. Considering contemporary crossings, Lucile Desblache further analyzes the cyborg as a liminal being and its refusal of categorization as "Our cyborgean 'convergence culture' entwines virtual and real […] It renders humans […] increasingly dependent on technologies and fuels our consumption traditions" (247). While the concept of the feed seems impossibly futuristic, smartphone separation anxiety represents a real fear especially amongst young adults. Richard Emanuel dissects nomophobia, an abbreviation of no mobile phone phobia, and its effects on young adult lives. Based on a survey he conducted in the southeastern United States, one out of every five students rated themselves "totally dependent" on their smartphones (Emanuel 9). Furthermore, Emanuel claims that "the truth about smartphone addiction is that people are not addicted to their smartphone, they are addicted to the information, entertainment, and personal connections it delivers" (2). While smartphones currently exist outside the body, the devices act as an appendage that causes anxiety upon separation which suggests the potential transition towards an implant similar to the feed. Much like the earliest form of the feed, smartphones currently exist as a removeable device. However, as people grow increasingly dependent on the technology, they approach the risk of self-alienation.

Although Titus views the feed as an enhancement, his problematic dependence on the feed hinders his ability to actively interact with others. Despite their constant connection to others through m-chats and the overwhelming amount of media coverage spilling into their brains, the feed renders those within this society exceedingly lonely, and this loneliness triggers their consumerist impulses. Bradford suggests that "the dystopian setting of *Feed* is a state of emptiness where the young are offered consumerism as a substitute for participation in citizenship" (129). This concept surfaces at the beginning of the novel when Titus's group of friends arrive on the moon for spring vacation. Titus "was trying to talk to Link" but fails as the feed's activity overwhelms his brain with "banners that looked goldy and sparkling" (Anderson 8). Titus's use of the verb talk rather than chat signals his attempt to verbally communicate rather than send m-chats through the feed; however, the feed prevents him from doing so as it projects more advertisements than

he can filter. In this moment, the feed reveals itself as more of a hindrance than an enhancement as it consistently disrupts Titus's thoughts. Asma comments on the possibility of technology causing self-alienation as people lose the ability to control the technology and increasingly depend on it: "if the tools become constraints rather than emancipators, then we may be in for unprecedented forms of alienation. Technology may alienate us from ourselves, dehumanizing us and turning us into self-made monsters of a new sort altogether" (Asma 263). The feed progressively alienates the cyborgs as it strips away their ability to think independently and physically participate with the world around them.

Moreover, the cyborgs' excessive dependence on the feed yields a traumatic experience when a system hacker, the Coalition of Pity, temporarily disables all feeds within a certain distance and leaves the cyborgs with a rare, unbearable silence. The hacker manages to deactivate the feeds, and when the police arrive, they "shut off" the cyborgs and their bodies fall to the ground (Anderson 40). Their bodies' inability to function without the feed verifies not only their mental dependence on the feed but also their physical reliance on the feed as an organ. Despite his friends surrounding him in the hospital, Titus admits that "[he] missed the feed" (Anderson 47). Titus and his friends cannot physically interact with one another due to their dependence on the feed to communicate. Also, this event further proves the cyborgs' need for consumption as the disablement of their feeds takes away their ability to view and purchase commodities while rendering them essentially lifeless. Titus wakes up in the hospital and instantly tries to connect to the feed but finds himself with "no credit […] disconnected from the feednet […] [and] starting to get scared" (Anderson 43-44). His emptiness results from his inability to interact the only way he knows how—through consuming advertisements and products. The doctors and technicians eventually fix the feed, and Titus compares the device's activation to the vitality of water: "We were all starting to feel good […] the feed was pouring in on us now, all of it, all of the feednet […]It came down on us like water […] like frickin' spring rains […]We were dancing in it like rain, and we couldn't stop laughing" (Anderson 70-71). Even though their literal brains remain functional the entire time, the feed's reconnection immediately makes the group more lively and signifies the dehumanization of their reliance.

As those with the feed depend more on the device while also losing agency over their own thoughts, they fall into the trap of consumerism set up by the corporations controlling the feed. Using the society's vernacular, Titus illustrates the way the feed originally targeted consumers: "*It was all da da da, this big educational thing, da da da, your child will have the advantage, encyclopedias at their fingertips, closer than their fingertips*" (Anderson 47). Initially parents had their children undergo the feed implantation to ensure their child's advantage over others and, therefore, their further socioeconomic progression. However, the feed quickly transforms from an educational enhancement into the main source of entertainment; Titus continues, "now, it's not so much about the educational stuff but more regarding the fact that everything that goes on, goes on on the feed" (Anderson 48). They receive the news, watch television, and constantly view advertisements through the feed. Even though the feed often overwhelms and muddles the characters' thoughts, Titus still claims that "the braggest thing about the feed, the thing that made it really big, is that it knows everything you want and hope for, sometimes before you even know what those things are" (Anderson 48). As the feed continuously fills minds with personalized advertisements, their entire lives begin to revolve around consumption and competing with those around them. The novel represents consumerist monstrosity as those with the feed evolve into zombielike creatures due to their mindless consumption of merchandise. Concerning this zombielike consumption, Asma claims that "An environment lacking in basic needs (employment, food, shelter, etc.) can produce a dehumanized populace, but an environment with too much wealth and prosperity can also dehumanize" (241). Their inability to reason and the highly suggestive advertisements trap them in a vicious cycle of consumption and cause the cyborgs in *Feed* to turn into zombielike creatures.

Although the feed invasion begins at birth for most people, not everyone chooses this path due to its expense or their opposition to the device. Those who live without the feed or receive the feed later in life, allowing their brain more time to develop, obtain the ability to think for themselves more so than the others. For example, Violet gets the feed implanted at age seven whereas Titus receives the feed at birth. As Violet's brain was more developed at the time of installation, this allows Violet more agency over her

thought process than Titus. She both recognizes and resists the consumerist monstrosity entrapping this society, but Titus fails to challenge the feed's manipulation. During Titus's moon visit, he meets Violet, a girl who immediately appears different from the other teenagers due to her "dress of gray wool" that "wasn't plastic" (Anderson 17). Although Violet may appear "normal" to the reader, her clothes signal her difference to the others as they typically wear shiny, plastic clothing promoted and sold through the feed. Titus confesses that "[they] were all just kind of staring at her like she was an alien. She smiled. [They] just kept staring at her" (Anderson 23). Violet's difference results from her ability to make her own choices and not instinctively submit to the feed's advertisements. In this same chapter, two of the other girls in Titus's friend group to the bathroom "because hairstyles had changed," and they could not resist immediately conforming to the new trend (Anderson 20). However, even after Titus notes her strange appearance, Violet's difference attracts Titus. He confesses, "I thought she was the most amazing person I had ever seen in my life, even if she was weird as shit" (Anderson 24). Here, Titus represents the human impulse of "the simultaneous lure and repulsion of the abnormal or extraordinary being" as Violet embodies a philosophy completely Other to him—nonconformity (Asma 6). While Violet's appearance expresses her difference from the others, it also hints at her rare ability to exercise her agency and resist submission even at the risk of further alienation.

Titus's repulsion and attraction to Violet derives from her autonomy that enables her to practice resistance. Expounding upon the cyborgs' inability to deviate from the trends and behaviors advertised by the feed, Lisa Kerr explains that the "feed literally invades the human body […] [and] rather than enhancing personality, the feed demolishes free thinking, turning individuals into rampant consumers and trend-crazed drones for whom the idea of autonomy is virtually nonexistent" (28). While the others with the feed immediately submit to its advertisements, Violet's late implantation enables her to resist. As Titus compares himself to Violet, her difference brings about his self-consciousness of his lack of autonomy. Shortly after meeting Violet, Titus continues talking with his friends and realizes how ridiculous they sound: "suddenly I realized that we didn't really sound too smart. If someone overheard us, like that girl [Violet], they might think

we're dumb" (Anderson 20). Titus first expresses concern about his intelligence after meeting Violet, and this anxiety builds throughout his relationship with her. Later on in this same section, Titus continues, "I could completely feel Violet watching us. She was listening. I didn't want to have her judging us, and thinking we were too boring or stupid or something" (Anderson 56). Before they even speak to each other, Violet's presence prompts Titus's self-awareness as he begins to question his and Violet's differences.

Even as Titus recognizes their differences, he fails to realize the reasoning behind that difference—the time at which they relinquished control over their minds to the corporations. Titus receives the feed at birth, and his brain never develops as the device "disables [the cyborgs] both intellectually and physically" (Kerr 29). The feed continuously pours information into his brain, and never allows the organ to work on its own: "Intellectually, [those who received the implant at birth] are void of independent thought […] Titus and his friends do not question the dangers of this type of technology" (Kerr 29). As the feed strips the cyborgs' ability to think independently, the feed promotes their blind passivity of the device's control. Aside from obtaining the feed after some brain development, Violet also home schools herself and reads avidly while the corporations further dehumanize the population by controlling their public education. Titus illustrates the power shift from local governments to global corporations: "Now that School™ is run by the corporations, it's pretty brag, because it teaches us how the world can be used, like mainly how to use our feeds […] now we do stuff in classes about how to work technology and how to find bargains and what's the best way to get a job and how to decorate our bedroom" (Anderson 109-110). Titus even admits to his illiteracy as the feed presents information audibly and he "kind of protested [reading] in School™" (Anderson 65). Therefore, Violet's reading habits appear quite abnormal to him and his other friends. Titus questions it: "'She was always reading things about how everything was dying and there was less air and everything was getting toxic… She said that it made her frightened to read all this kind of thing… So one time I said to her that she should stop... [and] she was like, *But I want to know what's going on*" (Anderson 111). Unlike Titus, Violet understands the power of education and strives to keep herself informed about how the corporations unfortunately control their society. Even though they

often view the other as strange and share many differences, Titus and Violet attempt to understand the other's perspective.

As Violet's free thinking makes Titus question his own autonomy, she gradually brings him into consciousness of the monstrosity consuming him and the others within this society, but Titus initially refuses to accept the feed's ability to manipulate for so many years. Because Violet remembers life without the feed, she recognizes the feed's ability to mold the society into mindless consumers. She explains this process to Titus: "'Everything we do gets thrown into a big calculation… They want to know what you want… They're also wanting to make you want things […] it's all streamlining our personalities so we're easier to sell to'" (Anderson 97). While the feed's cataloging attempts to make the consumption more personal, Baudrillard discredits this philosophy and argues that "[w]e can imagine… each individual feels unique while resembling everyone else: all we need is a schema of collective and mythological projection—a model[…] advertising has changed from a commercial practice to a theory of the praxis of consumption" (Baudrillard 11-12). Rather than individualizing people, the corporations objectify those with the feed by creating consumer profiles and promoting blind consumption while obtaining even more profit. Titus expresses his lack of concern and replies, "'Yeah. Okay. That's the feed. So what?'" (Anderson 97). In response, Violet enlightens Titus about her plan to subvert the system so that the feed can no longer target her: "'What I'm doing… is trying to create a customer profile that's so screwed no one can market to it. I'm not going to let them catalog me. I'm going to become invisible… [I'm] Complicating. Resisting'" (Anderson 98). Recognizing this injustice, Violet attempts to overthrow the feed and resist its objectification. In this subversion, Violet reflects Asma's prediction of "The current advances in robotics [leading to] […] a time when a race of artificial slaves will rise up and overthrow their human masters […] [revealing that] the fear we have that something we control will twist around and start to control us" (Asma 257). Originally, people chose to receive the feed, but over time it developed into a necessity as their society marginalizes those without it. Eventually the feed begins to control the cyborgs rather than the people controlling the mechanism. After they go on the fake shopping spree, asking about objects they did not buy, Violet asks Titus what he thinks about resisting. At this point in

the novel, Titus makes a joke about resisting and refuses to think about the terrifying power of the feed.

Moreover, Titus often struggles to consider another point of view as his dependence on the feed greatly limits his perspective. Violet expresses her frustration at the corporations for manipulating people but also towards the society for blindly following the feed: "No one with feeds thinks about it […]When you have the feed all your life, you're brought up to not think about things[…] It's something that makes me angry, what people don't know about these days. Because of the feed, we're raising a nation of idiots. Ignorant, self-centered idiots" (Anderson 113). As Violet tries to help the group of friends, but especially Titus, recognize the monstrosity consuming them, it proves increasingly difficult for her as they refuse to believe the possibility of the feed's oppression. The cyborgs within Anderson's novel transform into "media zombies" due to their increasingly submissive attitude towards the feed's advertisements. If the feed advertises it, the cyborgs immediately purchase it regardless of their familiarity with or desire for the product. Mika Pantzar defines the media zombie as "a dystopia of a human being chained to an entertainment machine […] [as a] computer society offer[s] unprecedented opportunities for the passive reception of stimuli" (13). The feed's dehumanization allows the corporations to further manipulate their control over the cyborgs as their projection of advertisements continuously influence their impulsive consumption.

As the characters evolve into these media zombies, their consumption increases, and the corporations abuse this by camouflaging their industry's toxicity through the commodification of it. The earth's contamination produces small lesions on everyone's bodies, and the United States president addresses the problem by falsely claiming that the American industry did not cause the sores. Initially everyone attempts to cover the open cuts, but the feed popularizes them by showing celebrities modeling their own lesions. This extreme scarring that occurs towards the end of the novel demonstrates the damaging extent of the corporation's control as they manage to commercialize the previously shameful, oozing wounds that make the skin transparent. Quendy, one Titus's friends, arrives at a party embracing her lesions so that others "could see all the red fibers through the splits in the skin […] *like muscles and tendons and ligaments and stuff*" (Anderson 198-199). The

corporation's ability to camouflage this epidemic further proves the cyborgs' submissiveness as they not only accept the lesions but also purchase fake lesions similar to temporary tattoos. They still fail to question the feed and corporations even though the repercussions of their extensive consumption causes their skin to rot. Recognizing the feed's increasing power, Violet strives warn the others of its danger, but everyone dismisses her and mocks her "abnormality." Titus recalls Violet's distress: "[She] was screaming, '*Look at us! You don't have the feed! You are feed! You're feed! You're being eaten! You're raised for food! Look at what you've made yourselves!*' She pointed at Quendy, and went, '*She's a monster! A monster! Covered with cuts! She's a creature!*'" (Anderson 202). Violet equates Quendy to the commodity as the device removes their autonomy and objectifies those who do not resist the feed. While Violet accuses Quendy of morphing herself into the monster, those who receive the feed at birth prove to have little room for objection to the technology.

Furthermore, as his own socioeconomic status and the feed's regulation place limitations on his perspective, Titus primarily views the feed as a device promoting progression. His privilege causes his failure to realize these dependencies on technology lead to a marginalization of the less powerful. As "Titus's generation is not built to question the feed," his inability to oppose the device derives from his reliance on the feed as "one more functioning organ, an integral part of [the] body system" (Kerr 29). Due to these limitations placed on his, and many other lives, Titus remains unaware that only seventy-three percent of the population actually have feeds until Violet brings it to his attention. Shocked, Titus asks, "There's that many who don't? […] What do you mean?" (Anderson 112). Violet explains that even she received the feed much later in life than most others, because "[they] didn't have enough money. When [she] was little. And [her] dad and mom didn't want [her] to have one" (Anderson 112-113). Titus further proves his ignorance when asking why Violet's father did not come to the moon even after their hospitalization due to the Coalition of Pity hacking their feeds. Again, Violet explains, "'Do you know how much it costs to fly someone to the moon? […] He wanted to come, but it would have been, like, a month of his salary. He saved up for a year to send me'" (Anderson 103). Violet eventually received the feed, but "the problem is, if you get the feed after you're fully formed, it doesn't fit as snugly… It's more susceptible

to malfunction… It can break down more easily" (Anderson 170). While Titus passively believes the feed benefits everyone, Violet testifies against this as her lower socioeconomic status prevents her from obtaining the newest, most reliable feed.

Although Violet's late implantation allows her more autonomy, her nonconformist behavior poses a major threat to the corporations, and her feed begins to malfunction as they attempt to cast her out of their society. The malfunctioning begins shortly after she invites Titus to resist with her which suggests the feed's attempt to stop her from warning the other cyborgs against the dangers of the feed. She explains that her feed "'is really malfunctioning,'" and as it "'is tied in to everything… Sometimes feed errors are fatal'" (Anderson 169). Violet's feed eventually begins deteriorating which means her brain also starts to wither. Even though her brain development surpasses most others, the feed's deterioration threatens her life because it controls so much of her body's function. Confirming their attempt to reject Violet, the corporation she contacts refuses to repair her feed due to her previous resistance: "*Unfortunately, FeedTech and other investors reviewed your purchasing history, and we don't feel that you would be a reliable investment at this time […] I'm afraid you'll just have to work with your feed the way it is*" (Anderson 247). Their equating Violet to an investment confirms the objectification of the cyborgs, and the feed's control over the them permits the corporations to dispose of the cyborgs whenever they attempt rebellion. Violet continues her fight against the feed's control, but she confesses, "'They're really close to winning. I'm trying to resist, but they're really close to winning'" (Anderson 262). Violet slowly loses control over her limbs, and the feed deletes her memories from her life before the feed. Violet ultimately fails at resisting the feed, because the device gradually wins control over her mind and body. At this point, her body begins to convulse, and Titus recalls that "she had broken somehow… she was shaking, and her eyes were all white and rolling around, she couldn't talk anymore" (Anderson 202). The feed successfully ends Violet's revolt against the feed and renders her braindead while her traumatizing downfall triggers the beginning of Titus's resistance.

As Violet lies in a comalike state, unable to think at all, Titus essentially assumes the role of her feed as she relies on him to relay information about current events and even herself. Because Violet anticipates her eventual defeat, she sends Titus a recording of all

her memories: "*I'm going to tell you everything. Some day, I might want you to tell it back to me*" (Anderson 253). However, Titus never agrees to this transaction. Despite his familiarity with the feed's typical overabundance of advertisements, Violet's messages overwhelm Titus to the point that he "didn't open them […] had a headache […] [and] deleted everything she had sent" (Anderson 253-254). Violet's asking Titus to exist as her feed elicits his comprehension of the feed's authority as he now, involuntarily, must provide the only information she receives; Violet fully relies on him in the same way he depends on the feed. Titus holds the power to limit and censor the information he gives, and that control frightens him. As Violet lies in bed looking "real, real pale," Titus shifts from a "media zombie" into mortality as he recognizes the feed's ability to manipulate the cyborgs through the suppression of their minds (Anderson 286). Thomas J. Morrissey argues that "Violet's slow decline as her feed fails offers Titus a chance to show his humanity and maybe even vow to avenge her or to at least give a meaning to her death" (196). Throughout the novel, Titus rejects Violet's persistent cautions against the feed, but, in the final chapters, Titus signals his step towards humanity as he promises to attempt resisting the feed. Even though Violet cannot mentally acknowledge his proclamation, Titus assures her of his final understanding and acceptance of her warnings.

In the final chapter of the novel, Titus's and Violet's roles reverse as Titus now informs Violet while she lies passively in her hospital bed. The inversion of their roles initiates when Titus calls Violet a zombie (Anderson 269). Originally, Titus personified the mindless zombie submitting to the feed's power, but the feed now controls Violet's body and renders her a zombie as she cannot control her mind or limbs. Titus enters Violet's room and notices her lying there, "an empty shell," like countless other cyborgs (Anderson 235). Despite his previous apathy towards the corporation's increasing control, he decides to "tell [Violet] the news […] some things [she] likes. The strange facts […]' [He tells] her that the Global Alliance had issued more warnings about the possibility of war… that there had been rioting malls all over America (Anderson 296). This moment proves significant for Titus's autonomy as he manages to break through the feed's limitations on his perspective. As Violet lifelessly lies there, Titus "'could see [his] face, crying, in her blank eye'" (Anderson 298). His crying "for the first time

in his life," further "[signifies his] move toward humanity" (Kerr 31). Titus receives Violet's humanity as his recognition of the feed's supremacy allows his resistance of it.

Anderson's *Feed* exemplifies how technological dependency allows the oppression of minds, produces self-alienation, further marginalizes the poor, and encourages compulsive consumerism. While the initial enhancements spawned by technological innovations seem to initiate progression, the eventual dependencies on technology strip individuals of their agency and often cause these dependencies to go unvoiced. Furthermore, Pantzar asks not how lives change with the new advancements in technology but, rather, how "we change with new technology" and its intrusion. While relying on technology appears monstrous in many ways, the perception of this monster as uncontrollable ultimately drives the fear. Recognizing a monstrosity, as Titus eventually does, will not dissolve the monster altogether, but it initiates one's ability to successfully approach their monstrosity rather than continuously suppressing it.

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