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Domesticating the Bisclavret: An Examination of Identity Erasure in Knighthood

Keri Jones, University of West Georgia

The medieval knight suffers from an identity complex. His sense of honor, reputation, and selfhood are all intertwined with his loyalty to his lord, his land, and his lady, if he has one, though it has not always included this multiplicity of concerns. Originally, only a knight's prowess in battle determined his worth, and it was not until the Late Middle Ages when knighthood merged into the arena of aristocratic nobility, taking on unofficial codes of chivalry that included structured relationships with women (Schneider 29). This shift created a man whose identity was divided to the point of fragmentation, unable to meet every standard, and such themes of unobtainable chivalric ideals are often explored in medieval literature. Marie de France's Breton *lais* are no exception, most likely written amid the knights' identity shift, around the late twelfth century. "Bisclavret," one of her *lais* that bears the name of her main character, depicts a werewolf-knight's struggle to balance his multitude of loyalties, and as a result, he loses touch with his identity, autonomy, and his humanity, imprisoned in his wolf form. Throughout his loss of humanity, Bisclavret retains his chivalric qualities, but the toxic dependency he exhibits towards these ideologies is troubling. No matter which form he is in, Bisclavret is at the mercy of others and is rarely even *willing* to maneuver independently, so indoctrinated is he into his role as courteous knight. Ultimately, Marie de France utilizes the werewolf motif within "Bisclavret" to represent a loss of humanity under the extreme confines of knightly identity and idealized chivalric codes of conduct, leading readers to consider the problematic masculine essentialism constructed in medieval literature.

Within the first twelve lines of "Bisclavret," the narrator establishes a difference between the werewolves of the past and the individual werewolf of the story, contrasting their capacity to integrate with humans, and essentially, their humanity. According to the narrator, "There was a time when one would hear / . . . / that many people became werewolves / and kept house in the woods" (5-9). The narrator creates a myth in this past period of common transformation from human to wolf, and also bridges the gap between animal and human in the homes they occupied. By recognizing this fine boundary, these werewolves are not so dissimilar to ancient, nomadic humans, prior to "civilization," who lived closer to the land and amongst the animals they transformed into. However, these werewolves were "wild beast[s]" that "[devoured] people and [did] great harm [when in a frenzy]" (9-11). The savage depiction of these werewolves is only so shocking when contrasted against the *bisclavret*. The baron introduced has no name of his own, identified only by the narrator's Breton term for this individual "werewolf," his title, and his characteristics, which are more important for the narrative function of the *lai*. Described as a noble, "handsome, good knight / . . . / . . . dear to his lord / and beloved by all his neighbors" (17-20), he is unlike the werewolves of the past. This werewolf has an established reputation with others and no known instances of violence, certifying his capacity for humanity. This distinction of the bisclavret is important, as the narrator makes it clear that this individual is the focus: "Now I let this matter be; I want to tell of the *bisclavret*" (13-14). He is isolated from his ancestors, having chosen knighthood over beasthood, becoming civilized and, arguably, "domesticated," according to Noah Guynn, as "feudal allegiance [requires] a form of submission that is analogous to, and literalized as, bestial abasement (qtd. in "Of Werewolves and Wicked Women" 61). The domestication of the bisclavret adds more pressure to his individuality, however, as he must now balance his knightly duties alongside his secret second form, which the *lai* immediately presents as an impossibility.

Despite his shining record as a baron, the tension in his divided identity comes to immediate fruition in the plot when his wife demands to know the truth about his weekly adventures from home. Initially, the bisclavret (whom I will now refer to as the proper noun, Bisclavret) seems to have maintained an illusion of balance, meeting the standards of an ideal knight. Of course, Marie's narrator is quick to inform us that things are not as simple as they appear: "[The wife] was greatly troubled by one thing: / for three whole days [she lost him]; neither she nor their neighbors know where he goes" (24-28). Bisclavret's absence, expectedly, worries his wife, though it also points to a conflict that extends into his duties to his land and king. By being gone for up to twelve days a month, more than one-third

of his time is taken away from his knightly obligations. Lucas Wood contemplates his disappearances as foreshadowing: "Might the baron's telltale absences figure his inevitable failure to be fully present either to sovereign or to wife, and might that failure betray an impossibility that is properly constitutive . . . of courtly masculinity?" ("The Werewolf as Mobius Strip" 18). Whether or not Bisclavret's weekly adventures constitute a *neglectful* imbalance of managing his duties, they have negative consequences. Under the assumption that her husband is cheating on her, the wife begs Bisclavret to explain himself, but this is a fatal question for him. He warns her that if he told her, it would "divide [her] from his love / and destroy [himself]" (55-56). Despite his foresight and caution, this is exactly what happens. As he discloses his secret, hiding nothing from her (63), he reveals that he does not match the norm, the ideal, and thus his entire identity is at risk. Bisclavret's attempts to hide his truth expose an internal anxiety that is hyperaware of appearances and proper behavior, which he knows would be misinterpreted if his wolf side was exposed. It is this hyperawareness of proper etiquette that hinders him, forcing him to obscure part of himself from the world, and it is the same chivalric code that is used against him in the interrogation scene led by his wife.

Bisclavret's wife utilizes her husband's inherent chivalric behavior and sense of honor against him in order to gain power over him. During the interrogation scene, the wife's rhetorical strategy systematically appeals to different aspects Bisclavret's knighthood. Initially, she appeals to his protective instincts by revealing her fear in asking him about his absence, which he immediately moves to placate by embracing her. He also enables the traditionally dangerous concept of an honor-bound oath to his wife by assuring her that "You will never say *anything* to me that, / if I know, I will not tell you" (40-41, emphasis mine). This seals his fate, as the wife takes his statement to the fullest extent of its meaning and forces him to admit the truth. Furthermore, she reminds him of his obligations as a husband and sets strict rules for him to follow within their marriage: "I love you more than all the world: / you must hide nothing from me" (80-81). Each of these rhetorical strategies pressure him into sticking by his word as a husband whose loyalty to his wife is being questioned and ultimately whose reputation as a man is being threatened. The only way he can reassure his wife that he is not cheating on her is to reveal the secret of his werewolf identity and subvert his humanity to her. This places the wife in a position of power over him, as she takes advantage of his honor to get to a truth that was purposefully hidden from her. Bisclavret is trapped, "tormented and pestered" (87), with no other option but to concede to his wife's will. He is not allowed to be a man with unknown depths to his identity, parts that are entirely his own and exist outside of the realm of knowledge or

influence of his wife. As both a punishment for hiding his werewolf form and an anxious reaction against an intimidating assumption of "savage maleness" on the wife's part (Schneider 34), Bisclavret's clothes are stolen and he is stripped of his human outer shell, degraded to spend eternity in his wolf form within the forest and ostracized from society. Thus, the scene reveals Bisclavret's honor as a weakness that can be utilized to notorious and manipulative ends by others, and his ultimate adherence to the knightly ideologies reduce him to a puppet, lacking true autonomy.

Despite spending an entire year in the forest as a werewolf (135), Bisclavret maintains his inner knightly identity, superseding his animalistic form that has no need to perform chivalry. The chance to prove his inner humanity arrives when the king enters the forest on a hunting trip, a traditionally masculine event that once again bridges the gap between humans and animals. In an effort to avoid swift death from the jaws of the hunting dogs, Bisclavret "[runs] to [the king] to ask mercy / . . . [takes] him by the stirrup, / [and kisses] his leg and his foot" (146-48). This moment affirms Bisclavret's unique humanity underneath the werewolf exterior to the king and his men, for they associate his submission with knightly loyalty. French historian Marc Bloch connects this scene between Bisclavret and his king with a similar ceremony performed by a vassal to his sovereign:

> Imagine two men face to face; one wishing to serve, the other willing or anxious to be served. The former puts his hands together and places them, thus joined between the hands of the other man—a plain symbol of submission, the significance of which was sometimes further emphasized by a kneeling posture. (qtd. in Sconduto 45)

Unable to speak, Bisclavret must awkwardly perform submission in the only way he is currently capable, hoping to make it recognizable enough for the king. Fortunately, the men see that "this beast has intelligence and understanding" (157) and take mercy on the bisclavret. Under these circumstances, Bisclavret and the king return to their former lord-retainer relationship in spite of a difference of species. Bisclavret loyally follows the king back to his castle and the king, in awe of this marvel, protects him in turn, "command[ing] all his people / to take good care of it for love of him" (170-71). In the castle setting, Bisclavret's nobility is recognized by all, mimicking the narration at the beginning of the poem. As Thomas Schneider asserts in his analysis of Marie de France's shape-changers, "the characteristics of knighthood that comprise this chivalric identity often transcend metamorphosis, even metamorphosis from human to animal" (28). Thanks to his extraordinary chivalric performance, Bisclavret is able to

re-join the society he had been exiled from. However, there is a cost to entering the court once again, in the form of Bisclavret's literal domestication.

Within the castle, Bisclavret owes his life to the king, and in performing absolute loyalty to him as compensation, he transforms from a werewolf into a domesticated dog. The king's merciful declaration to spare Bisclavret's life from the hunting dogs in the forest allows Bisclavret to return to a familiar, safe space wherein he can act out his inherit courtesy; had he stayed in the forest, his identity as a knight would go to waste and Bisclavret would be forgotten. It is the combination of human intelligence, wolf body, and total self-subjugation that turn Bisclavret into the king's dog. Alison Langdon delves into the doglike qualities Bisclavret possesses in her article, "The Nose Knows: Encountering the Canine in Bisclavret." She writes, "Where wolves are cunning, dogs are intelligent and discerning; where wolves are rapacious, bloodthirsty maneaters, dogs are singular in their loyalty and devotion to humans" (53), and when Bisclavret "[exhibits] gentility, meekness, and rational discernment, [he] marks himself as dog rather than wolf" (56). This is seen especially when Bisclavret attempts to attack the knight who conspired with his wife to steal his clothes and prevent him from transforming back into a human. "[Bisclavret] would have done him great injury" were it not for the king's prevention (200). Here, Bisclavret behaves entirely of his free will in order to get vengeance, but the king's call ultimately halts him, reminding Bisclavret that in this setting, the king holds power over his actions. Once again, the social constraints of the medieval court hinder his autonomy. This scene repeats itself when Bisclavret sees his wife and manages to bypass proper etiquette to tear the nose from her face (235); arguably, both acts of violence become Bisclavret's only self-motivated, emotion-driven behaviors, for any other time he is too concerned with his society's expectations to act on his own free will. The court is astonished by his actions, begins to question his humanity, and considers putting him to death, and because he lacks a voice for himself, Bisclavret cannot explain his reasons, even though they may be justified. It is up to the members of the court, namely the king and the wise man, to interpret for him and perform his justice. Luckily, as a result of his nearly spotless reputation in the castle, the wise man assumes "[Bisclavret] has some cause for anger against her / and also against her husband" (249-50), and so the court tortures the wife into revealing the truth. Therefore, though Bisclavret does impact the decisions within the court, he is not allowed to extract justice for himself and must exist within the boundaries ascribed to him. His knightly identity continuously suppresses his autonomy, but without said identity he would be no better than the ancient werewolves from the poem's prologue.

With the wise man's insistence and the king's power, Bisclavret's clothes are restored to him and he has the chance to return to his human form, but

his initial hesitation suggests a troubling transformation within Bisclavret's psyche. Now that the king is aware of Bisclavret's former identity as his missing retainer from more than a year ago, he is eager to restore him to his former glory, but when he returns Bisclavret's clothes, "[he] did not take any notice at all" (280), purposefully ignoring the gesture. This confuses both the audience and the king, who would expect Bisclavret to be equally enthusiastic to return to his human state. The wise man, once again, interrupts to correct the king and inform him that Bisclavret was incapable of changing his appearance in front of him, "he feels terrible shame about it" (288). Jeffrey Cohen theorizes that shame is a misinterpretation by the wise man, for "why would shame inhere in a return to a superior state?" (355). While the wise man's assessments have been accurate thus far, it is important to remember that Bisclavret still cannot speak for himself (and never actually speaks for the rest of the narrative), completely at the mercy of the men of the court to interpret his behavior how they see fit. In this instance, Bisclavret's naked humanity would be shameful and uncivilized, and allowing him to be clothed in king's chambers would preserve his dignity. Still, Cohen poses an interesting interpretation of this moment that alters the tone. He writes, "Could it be that Bisclavret is simply indifferent to return to a quotidian humanity, and thus offers no reaction at all these powerfully symbolic accouterments?" (355). To become human again would offer little to Bisclavret at this point in his life. With the exile of his wife, his identity as a knight reduces to the singular focus of his lord; however, while this version of knighthood is easier to balance than before, he remains at the mercy of others as a knight behaving under chivalric codes. Bisclavret's indifference to his clothes, then, is passive acceptance to becoming "at once a favorite hunting dog and . . . good household knight" (Cohen 356). Each attempt for Bisclavret to act independently has been prevented, restrained, or reprimanded, and in his final moments of forced lycanthropy, Bisclavret's selfhood is fully subsumed by his role as a knight. When Bisclavret the *man* awakens in bed at last, he is wrapped in the embrace of the king, figuratively married to his liege.

The extreme confines of knightly identity provoke the loss of humanity experienced by Bisclavret, symbolized through Marie de France's werewolf motif. Bisclavret is unable to manage all of the responsibilities and loyalties assumed under the role, and yet he cannot escape the ideologies associated with his position lest he roam the woods for all of eternity, forgotten in literary history. Through his fragmentation, Marie's *lai* showcases and critiques the inhumane, essentialist mentality within the idealized knight character, whose chivalric traits often overshadow his unique identity. For modern readers, "Bisclavret" offers a chance to consider our autonomy within society, its power structures, and expectations regarding our various

duties that seem to only be expanding as we have more and more possibilities and responsibilities in the ever-developing world. Expanding beyond the concept of knighthood, the text allows its audience to consider the various identities, fragmentations, and identity crises occurring constantly in the twenty-first century due to the variety of ideals we are bombarded with within the paradoxically all-encompassing, exclusionary messages of today's media attempting to shape the perception of how we *should* be. Despite being centuries old, "Bisclavret" continuously inspires critical evaluation of both manipulative and well-meaning influences on individuality, lest we become domesticated dogs as well.

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"Assente" vs. "Juggement": Community Formation in the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer

Marissa Yuen, Colgate University

> "And if yow liketh alle by oon assent
> For to stonden at my juggement,
> And for to werken as I shal yow seye . . .
> Hoold up youre hondes, withouten more speche."
> —*Riverside Chaucer* A.777-83

With these words, Geoffrey Chaucer opens his infamous storytelling competition. While the thirty members of the *Canterbury Tales* are united through their common interest in pilgrimage, they also find a sense of community in this agreement to entertain each other and win the reward of a free dinner courtesy of their host, Harry Bailey. By designating Harry Bailey their governor, judge, and reporter, the pilgrims agree to stand at his judgment, and therefore obey whatever he might devise. Their *assente*, combined with his *juggement*, serve as the foundation of this small yet functional community. The words *assente* and *juggement* appear prominently in the *Canterbury Tales*—a staggering 47 and 76 times, respectively. It is safe to assume that Chaucer does not use these words due to a lack of imagination. Instead, he uses these words to point to the various elements of community formation, a concept that becomes the focus of many of Chaucer's tales. It may seem that the communal *assente* guarantees just rule, while the individualized *juggement* of a powerful ruler might doom a society to tyranny. However, rather than reinforce the binary between *assente* and *juggement*, Chaucer's works instead illustrate the complexities of the relationship between the rulers and the ruled. He uses the words to explore

the various ways in which power both imposes its will on those below it and comes from those who vote it in.

The Middle English meaning of *jugge* hews closely to its modern counterpart. A *jugge* is defined as "one who tries cases and interprets the laws; a judge" (Middle English Dictionary). It follows that these judges have *juggement*, or "the power or authority to make decisions" (MED). In contrast, an emphasis on individuality is what distinguishes the word *assente* from *juggement*. When the pilgrims agree to Harry Bailey's proposal, they do so by recognizing him as their sole leader; he will be the "governour . . . juge and reportour" (A.813-14) to whose *juggement* they must be accorded. While the "oon assent" may require the agreement of "alle" the members of the pilgrimage, the proposed *juggement* belongs to Harry Bailey alone.

This individualistic understanding of *juggement* also presents itself in the word's definition as "a penalty imposed by a court or someone in a position of authority; punishment" (MED). As he lays out the details of his storytelling competition, Harry Bailey says, "'Whoso wole my juggement withseye / Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye'" (A.805-06). A few lines later, as the pilgrims set out for Canterbury in the morning, he repeats the line nearly word for word (A.833-34). The reinforcement of this rule reminds both the pilgrims and the reader that there are clear, established penalties for going against *juggement*. As a *juge*, Harry Bailey becomes an undisputed figure of authority over both the pilgrims and their tales. From this point on, the pilgrims will do as he says without objection. It is his word, and his alone, that will dictate the outcome of this storytelling competition; there is no sense that Harry Bailey's choice, once announced, will be up for much debate. He will mete out the punishment he deems fit. Never in the *Canterbury Tales* does the phrase "our juggement" appear; "oon juggement" would be an oxymoron. The concept of *juggement* reflects an individual opinion rather than an agreed-upon stance, a far cry from the unanimous *assente* at which the pilgrims must arrive to proceed with Harry Bailey's proposal. The use of *juggement* in this scene highlights its individualistic and authoritative nature. Thus, it may seem that *juggement* exists in authoritative singularity and in conflict with the reasoned agreement of *assente*.

One of Chaucer's most obviously misguided leaders makes a brief appearance in the "Summoner's Tale." The Summoner's character of the friar tells a tale within a tale, in which an angry ruler recklessly sentences three knights to death, solely because the ruler refuses to admit fault in his hasty judgment and values his pride over all else. The entire episode is an avoidable tragedy; according to the Summoner's friar, "ire is, in sooth, executour of pryde" (D.2010). Through this tale, he proves that anger is the worst of the seven deadly sins, and the characters' fates result from overabundant pride.

Anger even "engendreth homycide" (D.2009), or directly causes unjustified death. In this instance, anger and pride, rather than the pursuit of truth, motivate the ruler and the decisions he makes. He fails to work for the common good, and as such, he is a tyrant.

It is also worth noting that, despite the ruler's obvious faults and illogical actions, the knights are completely passive in the matter of their own survival. The only people who seem to come to any kind of *assente* are the three knights who "thought . . . it were the best reed / To lede hem bothe to the juge agayn" (D.2030-31). The tale implies that even the knight once senselessly sentenced to death is willing to overlook this prior judgment. All three of the knights still believe it in their best interests to consult this judge for guidance on the matter, presumably because of his status and the wisdom supposed to come with it. The knights maintain traditional, blind obedience to the station of their superior, even when the individual himself shows no signs of deserving it and doing so results in their needless deaths. Thus, this brief sermon serves as a concise example of what can happen when power goes unchecked and unquestioned.

Chaucer gives another example of an unfit ruler in the "Physician's Tale," explicitly describing the main character as a "false juge, that highte Apius" (C.154). The narrator repeatedly describes him as such, using the phrase "this false judge" three times in a single passage. Apius is an unambiguously corrupt leader, one who, upon seeing how beautiful the young Virginia is, decides that he "by slyghte / The mayden to his purpose wynne myghte" (C.131-32). From the outset, his intentions are blatantly dishonest and motivated by a lust he has no desire to tame.

The nature of Apius' planned trickery becomes clear when he abuses his power as a judge. Although Virginius offers reasoned opposition to the unjust seizure of his daughter, Apius "wolde no thyng tarie, / Ne heere a word moore of Virginius, / But yaf his juggement" (C.196-98). Like the ruler of the "Summoner's Tale," Apius makes his decision without the counsel of any advisors or peers. Apius does not pursue what is just, but that which aligns with his own selfish desires. His judgment, driven by his sinful lust and abuse of power, is objectively flawed and results in senseless death in his community. Apius embodies Fortescue's *dominium regale*, the ruler who governs based solely on his own desires and needs (Bracton 102). He does not use his power for the common good, and is thus the definition of a tyrant.

Given the ample evidence of flawed judgment in the *Canterbury Tales*, it may seem that Chaucer believes individual humans are too fallible to be capable of sound judgment, or that individuals in power should refrain from handing down punishments of any kind. However, upon exploration of the "Tale of Melibee," it is clear that Chaucer does, in fact, believe in the possibility of successful, singular judgment. The "Tale of Melibee" is one of

two told by the fictitious pilgrim Geoffrey, and as such, its narration may bear the strongest resemblance to the voice and views of the true Chaucer (Staley 190). The tale's placement, too, cannot be ignored; by the seventh fragment of the *Tales*, readers have been exposed to a host of unfit leaders, and may be looking for explanation as to why such behavior exists. With a name synonymous with judgment and common sense, along with her frequent references to great historic thinkers, Prudence is a transparent voice of wisdom to whose words the audience should adhere. As such, her audience, including her less informed husband, Melibee, should take her logical, reasonable words as unquestionable fact. Her thorough discussion on the nature of judgment, with its considerations of the pitfalls and the most effective ways to avoid these pitfalls, make the "Tale of Melibee" a detailed blueprint on how a just ruler should govern.

In her extended advice to Melibee, Prudence offers several points of wisdom that possiblyexplain the failures in judgment detailed elsewhere in the *Tales*. For example, Prudence tells her husband, "'And thanne shul ye dryve fro youre herte thre thynges that been contrariouse to good conseil; / that is to seyn, ire, coveitise, and hastifness'" (B^2.222). Prudence convinces him to take his time and avoid undue haste in making his decision, citing the common proverb, "'He that soone demeth, soone shal repente'" (B^2.219). This advice applies directly to the aforementioned "Summoner's Tale," as the ruler gives his commands swiftly and impulsively. Had he delayed his judgment, as Prudence advises, he might have learned crucial information that would have changed the outcome of a delicate situation.

In addition to haste, Prudence also advises her husband to avoid anger. She quotes Seneca, one of the most frequently referenced philosophers in the *Canterbury Tales*, in her explanation of the need to act without anger, saying, "'irous and wrooth, as seith Senec, ne may nat speke but blameful thynges, / and with his viciouse wordes he stireth oother folk to angre and to ire'" (B^2.222). According to Prudence and those she cites, nothing good can come from a leader who is consumed with, and therefore governed by, his blind fury. This especially applies in circumstances of great consequence, such as the decision to sentence three loyal knights to death. The advice in the "Tale of Melibee" aligns with that of the friar in the "Summoner's Tale," in that "ire is, in sooth, executour of pryde" (D.2010), and can directly cause an undeserved and unjustified death. As one of the seven deadly sins, anger highlights the worst of human nature and clouds one's judgment. Thus, Chaucer indicates that a wise judge is one who makes decisions from a position of reasoned analysis, one who is capable of waiting out the emotions that might overtake a tyrant.

Although lengthy deliberation alone might have solved the issue, Prudence presents further instruction on leadership that could have saved the

lives of the three knights. She advises her husband that it is "no folie to chaunge conseil whan the thyng is changed, or elles whan the thyng semeth ootherweyes than it was biforn" (B².220). There is no shame in changing one's mind if new information is introduced; in fact, doing so is a sign of wisdom. Prudence elaborates on the flexibility of wise men, saying, "A man may chaungen his purpos and his conseil if the cause cesseth, or whan a new caas bitydeth. / For the law seith that 'upon thynges that newely bityden bihoveth newe conseil'" (B².225). It is not only morally sound, but also required by law that judges reevaluate situations based on new information. The concept is grounded in the language of legal decision-making; Melibee and his fellow judges have no choice but to follow this manner of thinking. It follows that, in the "Summoner's Tale," the ruler's obsessive fixation on his pride, and his insistence on maintaining his original judgment, indicate foolishness and poor leadership. In his misguided attempt to protect his image, the ruler ultimately undermines his own credibility. Supporting her argument with both logical and legal support, Prudence, and Chaucer by extension, shows that wise judgment must be flexible.

The "Summoner's Tale" provides ample evidence as to why wise decisions cannot be made with undue haste or anger. The remaining item on Prudence's list, covetousness, is the primary reason for Apius' corruption and subsequent failure in the "Physician's Tale." Apius is the covetous man Prudence describes, the man who "'kan nought deme ne thynke, but oonly to fulfille the ends of his coveitise'" (B².222). All of Apius' actions are done in the interest of satisfying his lust, with little to no regard for the legal and moral violations he may commit along the way. This behavior, motivated by covetousness, supports the idea that "'coveitise is roote of alle harmes'" (B².222). Combined with the aforementioned pride and anger, as well as the ensuing hastiness to which such people may be inclined, the trait of covetousness again marks a leader as sinful, ungodly, and incapable of making judgments.

After this extensive exploration of the failures of corrupt or misguided leaders and the ways in which they could have corrected their methods, it bears mentioning that Chaucer does not have Prudence eradicate outright the use of judgment as punishment. Instead, Prudence advises Melibee to exercise mercy in his judgments, saying, "Ye most yeven moore esy sentences and juggementz. / For it is written that 'he that moost curteisly comandeth, to hym men moost obeyen'" (B².239). Punishment itself is still necessary to a functional society; as Prudence says, "'as by right and resoun, ther may no man take vengeance on no wight but the juge that hath the jurisdiccioun of it, / whan it is graunted hym to take thilke vengeance hastily or attemprely, as the law requireth'" (B².228). Although her statement warns that it is unlawful for the common man to take reckless vengeance into his own

hands, Prudence implies that a judge vested with authority is indeed entitled to such power. This assertion is grounded in the legal language of "right and reason" and "jurisdiction," and is even outright stated as a requirement of the law. It is important to note, too, that although Prudence advocates for mercy, she does not do so simply because forgiveness is inherently good, but because such behavior will bolster Melibee's reputation as a widely respected leader. This position is not idealistic, but practical advice to the project of just rule. Judges and their judgments, therefore, have valid, functional, even necessary places in society, but must adhere to the principles of *dominium politicum et regale* in order to be successful.

While the treatise on *juggement* provided in the "Tale of Melibee" can certainly explain the erratic behavior of Chaucer's flawed judges, it can also explain why some leaders enjoy such legitimate and effective rule. Perhaps no other judge of the *Canterbury Tales* exemplifies quite as many positive traits as Theseus in the "Knight's Tale." This tale presents Theseus, along with every other character, as chivalric and constantly conscious of the law. The Knight is described as loving "chivalrie, / Trouthe and honour, / fredom and curteisie" (A.1617-19). He is the highest-ranking officer on the pilgrimage, both in terms of social status and moral character, and as such, he is an idealized form of authority; if Chaucer intends any irony in his portrait, it is not made clear to the majority of readers (Justman 344). This suggests that the Knight's analysis of his own tale, as well as the actions of his ideal ruler, Theseus, should be taken as morally impeccable.

As one might expect from such a chivalric tale, the Knight uses *juge* as a noun, and always to refer to Theseus, who is predictably free from corruption. The Knight consistently refers to him using his proper title of "Duc Theseus," with variations including such phrases as "the noble conquerour" and "this worthy duc, this Theseus" (A.998-1001). Palamon, too, defers to Theseus' superior judgment, saying, "'thou art a rightful lord and juge'" (A.1719). Here, as in Prudence's discourse, *juge* is nearly synonymous with other terms for noble authority, such as "lord," "duke," and "conqueror." While it may seem that his power comes from his lofty position in chivalric society, it also undeniably derives from his wise leadership and the respect he gains from his constituents. Unlike the narrators of the *Canterbury Tales* who describe unfit judges, the narrating Knight does not show any doubt that Theseus is fit and qualified to make important decisions. It is clear that Theseus has earned the widespread respect of his people, achieving the ends that Prudence advises to Melibee.

The usage of *juge* in the "Knight's Tale" also serves to reinforce Prudence's assertions that judges, as well as their judgments, are necessary to a functioning government. For instance, when Theseus catches Arcite and Palamon in the woods, he uses all the authority of his station to accuse

them of fighting "withouten juge or oother officere, / As it were in a lystes roially" (A.1710-13). As Theseus states, the act of dueling without the presence of an official is a serious crime, one that is punishable by death. Thus, the duel is a scene of chaos, and signals a community fragmented enough to take matters into its own hands. With all of his people watching him, including the Queen and Emelye who beg him to act with mercy, Theseus ultimately has the duty as judge to control the chaos, and the way in which he manages the situation will reflect on his effectiveness as a leader.

The actions Theseus takes in reaction to this situation, in which he implements elements of the "Tale of Melibee's" advice, prove why he deserves to be in a position of power. With the law on his side, Theseus has more legitimate authority than the ruler of the "Summoner's Tale" to sentence the two knights to death. Theseus later demonstrates remarkable self-control over the impulsivity inherent in human nature, as he delays his judgment until after he has deliberated for a while, "whan his ire is thus agoon" (A.1781). The time he takes allows him to calm down and make a decision he will not later regret. Because of this self-control, Theseus' "ire hir gilt accused, / Yet in his resound he hem bothe excused" (A.1765-66). Here, Chaucer puts reason in direct opposition with anger. It should also be noted that in the course of Theseus' actions, none of his decisions are made in his own interest. Theseus is no tyrant; if anything, he is an "un-tyrant, a ruler who is offered temptations to follow his emotions into tyranny but reins himself back in for the *bonum commune*" (Wallace 108). Theseus resists the human tendencies to act on emotion, and instead focuses on the common good. By following the virtues and guidelines set out in the "Tale of Melibee," Theseus acts with utmost prudence and is able to make the best possible decision in a difficult circumstance.

While each of these traits certainly makes Theseus a legitimate leader, most noteworthy may be his ability to show mercy. After informing the knights of his decision to host a tournament, Theseus expresses his wish that as a reward for making such lenient laws, "'God so wisly on my soule rewe / As I shal evene juge been and trewe'" (A.1863-64). This phrase immediately draws parallels with Prudence's iteration of the Golden Rule, in that if Theseus wishes for God to have mercy on his soul, he himself should have mercy on those he judges if the situation allows for it. Indeed, Chaucer constructs the scene so that it seems this is one such situation; Palamon's immediate repentance, acknowledgment of his own wrongdoing, and willingness to accept Theseus' judgment suggest that harsh punishment is not necessary. This sentiment elevates the quality of mercy to a form of godliness, which men can achieve.

Acting on the periphery, outside of the Tales themselves, may be one of the *Canterbury Tales*' most effective judges of all: Harry Bailey. In comparison

to the "Knight's Tale," the connections between Harry Bailey's leadership and Prudence's advice are not quite as obvious. While he has been granted the position of "governour," "juge" and "reportour" (A.813-15), Harry Bailey's stakes are relatively lower than those of Theseus; Theseus must choose whether or not a man shall be put to death, while Harry Bailey must choose whether or not a man shall receive a free meal. Since he designed his storytelling competition to pass time on the pilgrimage to Canterbury, it is hard to imagine a situation in which he may be required to show any haste. Still, Harry Bailey manages to establish and maintain a constant sense of community among the thirty pilgrims throughout the duration of the pilgrimage. Even in this simple context, Harry Bailey achieves Fortescue's *dominium politicum et regale*, governing his people with only the laws to which they have assented. It follows, then, that given Prudence's wise advice, there must be some component beyond *juggement* that facilitates successful leadership and community formation. This, in a word, is the concept of *assente*.

Harry Bailey uses *assente* in its most common definition as "consent or approval" in his initial proposal to the pilgrims, offering them the storytelling contest to bring merriment to their journey to Canterbury if they "liketh alle by oon assent" (A.777). According to Chaucer's narrator, the thirty pilgrims do not take long to grant Harry Bailey the unanimous agreement of "oon assent" (A.785); compared to other decisions made throughout the *Canterbury Tales*, the conditions of a storytelling contest are relatively uncomplicated. Still, it is clear that, should any of the pilgrims have dissenting opinions, they also have the opportunity to voice them. Here, the collective pronoun "us" indicates that the narrator speaks on behalf of not only himself, but of the entirety of the pilgrimage; without the approval of each and every pilgrim, the concept of "oon assent" could not have been applied. This reasoned and communal *assente* thus becomes the foundation for the community that will continue throughout the rest of the *Canterbury Tales*.

Chaucer also uses *assente* to extend beyond verbal agreements to include agreements in "sentiment, attitude, opinion, will, or intention" (MED). Walter of the "Clerk's Tale" rules with a heightened awareness of this definition as well as the mental phenomenon *assente* can imply, an awareness most evident when he tells his subjects, "ye / Agayn my choys shul neither grucche ne stryve . . . And but ye wole assente in swich manere, / I prey yow, speketh namoore of this matere" (E.169-75). Similarly, in his proposal to his soon-to-be-wife, Grisilde, Walter instructs her, "Be ye redy with good herte / To al my lust . . . And eek when I say 'ye,' ne sey nat 'nay,' / Neither by word ne frowning contenance?" (E.351-55). His use of *assente* signals a commitment to unified, communal agreement; to *grucche*, on the other hand, would be to express "complaint; discontent, bitterness, resentment;

unease in (one's) conscience" (MED). Here, Walter commands that both his subjects and his wife enter a nearly legally binding agreement to refrain not only from outward expression of discontent, but also from any inward bitterness on the matter. He wants their assent in every sense of the word, down to the very thoughts they think. For Grisilde especially, this means complete submission and forfeiture of her free will. This example of *assente* signifies the seriousness and severity it can bear, in both its legally binding qualities and the full control of emotions and actions.

While *assente* may figure prominently into the "Clerk's Tale," the events of the tale show that Chaucer does not approve of this rigid kind of *assente* as an effective means of forming community. Indeed, this supposed guarantee of *assente* is short-lived; although the narrator says the townspeople "sworen and assenten / To al this thyng—ther seyde no wight nay" (E.176-77), they almost immediately go against this agreement. Instead, they immediately question his intentions and willingness to marry, saying, "Wol nat oure lord yet leve his vanytee? / Wol he nat wedde?" (E.250-52). Chaucer points out that the comments are made in private, but by the definition of *grucche*, the very existence of their doubt is enough to violate Walter's commands. With the presence of *grucche*, the antithesis of *assente*, this mandated form of *assente* cannot be relied upon to form a harmonious community, and thus undermines established and respected communal agreement.

It should be noted that, of all Walter's constituents, Grisilde is the only one to truly uphold her *assente*. In response to her husband's stringent conditions, she says, "'I swere that nevere willyngly, / In werk ne thoght, I nyl yow disobeye'" (E.362-63). Despite the cruel trials through which Walter puts her, she keeps her promise not to *grucche* against his will. Only at the very end of the tale, right before learning that her children are indeed alive and well, does Grisilde expresses the hardships of enduring such unrelenting adversity (E.1041). Her silence, it is revealed, has not been a result of numbness or ignorance, but has instead been the fulfillment of her pledge not to *grucche*. While Grisilde's lack of *grucching* defines her *assente*, the impression still remains that her compliance to this *assente* may have only contributed to her misfortune.

In the many contexts in which *assente* appears, it is crucial to remember that its simplest definition is the "mutual agreement of two or more parties" (MED), and in no way ensures morality. This definition of *assente* appears in the "Pardoner's Tale," most notably as the three young men decide to carry their newfound treasure "By oon assent, where as us thynketh best" (C.800-01). Their *assente*, like the men themselves, is short-lived, as they conspire to kill each other so that they might split their fortune in two ways rather than three. In one fell swoop, the three young men lose both their innocence and their lives. Given the speed with which these men are willing

to turn on each other, it is questionable whether actual *assente* ever existed in the first place. These once close-knit men, described as being prepared to "lyve and dyen ech of hem for oother, / As though he were his owene ybore brother" (C.703-04) are willing to violate their common, mutually agreed-upon assent in favor of increasing their personal fortunes, a situation which results in an overall detriment to the common good. Although Chaucer complicates the validity of the actual *assente* in this case, the concept remains an important signifier of agreement, an agreement that does not guarantee morality.

Finally, the concept of *assente* is manipulated and misused prominently in *Troilus and Criseyde*. Upon informing Crisyede of Troilus' love, Pandarus says that he sees Troilus "hasten hym with al his fulle myght / For to ben slayn, if his fortune assente, / Allas that God yow swich a beaute sente!" (II.334-36). While this may initially seem like a noble sentiment, the reality is that Troilus' *assente* to predetermined fate is essentially meaningless. Pandraus invokes the concept of *assente* to imply that Troilus has some kind of agency in his fate, rather than being the victim of the larger enterprises of fortune and God that control him. Pandarus goes on to promise Troilus, "God toforn, that it shal the suffise, / For it shal be right as thow wolt devyse" (III.335-36). Again, to say that Troilus is truly "devising" any of these plans would be generous. Instead, Pandarus concocts the plans, relays the messages, and positions the actors. Troilus gives, at best, only a passive form of consent. However, the way Pandarus phrases his propositions falsely conflates this sense of agency with the concept of *assente* by distorting and manipulating its original definition as mutual agreement.

Chaucer further complicates the concept of *assente* as mutual agreement in the discussions regarding Criseyde's willingness to meet Troilus. Pandarus chastises her, saying, "I am thyn em; the shame were to me, / As wel as the, if that I sholde assente / Thorugh myn abet that he thyn honour shente" (III.355-57). Here, to *assente* means "to concur or participate," meaning that Pandarus would be partially responsible for the damage done to Criseyde's honor if something were to go awry. If Pandarus is to *assente* to Criseyde, the two of them shall become of one mind; as uncle and niece, they will also share any gains or loss in honor. In this passage, Chaucer illustrates that in such an agreement between two people, in which they become of one mind, one acts on behalf of the other.

This notion of *assente* as one-mindedness is perhaps at its muddiest in Pandarus' deliberations on his niece's compliance. When Criseyde refuses to give Troilus anything but a passing look, the narrator states that Pandarus "moste assente on that conclusioun, / As for the tyme" (II.1300-01). The phrase "mooste assente" is an oxymoron; thus far, *assente* has implied a sense of agreement of will, in either outward or inward opinion. *Assente* is some-

thing that leaders can ask of their people, something that the people can either freely give or choose to withhold, and simply cannot be mandatory. In this scenario, Pandarus feels that he must concur with the conclusion, that he has no choice but to be satisfied with Criseyde's less-than-complete acquiescence; he misuses the word *assente* because, in reality, there is no true *assente* to give. Instead, the word masks his failure to achieve his desired outcome, perhaps in order to convince himself of his own agency in the matter. This misuse of *assente* highlights the human tendency to use the word in a euphemistic manner, resulting in an overestimation of one's own power.

As with the concept of *juggement*, the nature of proper *assente* receives thorough analysis in the "Tale of Melibee." Through the voice of Prudence, Chaucer emphasizes the importance that unified, communal agreement has to a harmonious society. Prudence quotes to Melibee the advice of Saint James, saying, "'by concord and pees the smale richesses wexen grete, / and by debaat and discord the grete richesses fallen doun'. And ye knowen wel that oon of the gretteste and moost sovereyn thyng that is in this world is unytee and pees" (RC B^2.1675-77). Although the passage does not include the word *assente*, the values it highlights are extremely similar and achieve the same ends of communal agreement. It is significant, too, that Prudence uses the word *richesses* to communicate prosperity to her husband. Just as in her explanation of the need for merciful judgment, she refrains from being overly idealistic. Prudence does not expect Melibee, or any other powerful rulers, to pursue peace for the sake of peace; by likening unity to a monetary value, her advice is practical and keeps her audience's interests in mind. Thus, *assente* is an answer to the division and discord that can threaten the prosperity of a community.

In addition to *assente*, the concept of counsel receives great emphasis in Prudence's guidance to achieving harmonious society. She cites Solomon, advising Melibee to "herkneth what they seye in conseillying, and yow governe after hire sentence. / Salomon seith, 'Werke alle thy things by conseil, and thou shalt never repente'" (B^2.1001-02). As in her warning against hastiness, Prudence stresses that Melibee ought to avoid situations he may later regret. Counsel should inform every action he takes as a leader; by ensuring that he exposes himself to counselors, Melibee can minimize the chance that he will make a judgment that will reflect poorly on his character. It follows that the counselors should reach some form of agreement, and this resulting *assente* is the action that a wise ruler is meant to take.

Although Prudence advocates for counsel in general, she also specifies exactly what type of counsel Melibee should solicit. She thinks it unwise of him to assemble a vast number of counselors, a "greet multitude of peple… straungefolk, yongefolk, false flatereres, and enemys reconsiled," when he should only have called upon his "trewe frendes olde and wise" (B^2.1243-

44). Prudence does advocate for the counsel of many people (B^2.1169), but she does not suggest that Melibee should side with a simple majority; after all, she says, "men shal al wey fynde a greeter nombre of fooles than of wise men" (B^2.1257). Chaucer's ideas are not those of democracy, in which each voice holds equal weight; instead, he states that some people are more worthy of giving counsel than others. In addition, these people must be of high moral character and well-known friends of their advisee, and should have the advisee's best interests at heart if they are to influence his most important decisions. As Chaucer demonstrates numerous times, the fact that an agreement is communal does not guarantee that it is morally sound or wise. If a leader is to *assente* to the will of his counselors, if he is meant to become of one mind with them, then he must know and trust their wisdom and intentions.

Having laid out the importance of counsel and the ways in which one might seek it out, Prudence offers one crucial qualification, saying, "For soothly thilke man that asketh conseil of a purpose, yet hath he free choys wheither he wole werke by that conseil or noon" (B^2.1082). Although Melibee may receive counsel on certain matters, he is in no way obligated to blindly accept whatever the counsel dictates, no matter how trusted and knowledgeable those counselors may be. Ultimately, he is the individual in the position of power, and retains his ability to make the final judgment. Chaucer's suggestion that rulers be allowed to oppose counsel creates a safe space for dissent, relieving those who disagree with their leader from fear of retribution. Thus, while counsel bears similarity and deals with the same elements as *assente*, the two are not synonymous. Rather, *assente* allows for the best possible counsel, ideally resulting in the best possible final *juggement*.

Just as in his representation of proper judgment, Theseus again emerges as the chivalric model of the implementation of *assente* in just leadership. Theseus' subjects widely respect him, which demonstrates why he deserves the position of power he occupies. While his informed and merciful judgment plays a role in this, his utilization of *assente* is also key. Towards the end of the "Knight's Tale," Theseus deliberates how best to remedy the complicated situation in the wake of Arcite's death. As he proposes that Emelye pity the lovesick Palamon and take him as a husband, Palamon addresses Emelye directly, saying, "'Suster . . . this is my fulle assent, / With al th'avys heere of my parlement'" (A.3075-76). Theseus mentions that he has discussed the matter with his parliament, reminding the reader that he is indeed a legitimate leader; his suggestions are made with the help of wise counsel, even if they may not pertain to the legal governance of the country.

The circumstances of Theseus and Emelye are not very much unlike those of Pandarus and Criseyde; after all, Theseus is Emelye's brother-in-law, and

as such, supposedly has some jurisdiction over her. Despite this, Theseus does not follow Pandarus' lead of using his *assente* as a means of coercing his young female relative. He also refrains from using *assente* to create the ultimatum-like circumstances Walter constructs for his Grisilde. Theseus, in his wisdom as a just leader, instead poses his *assente* as an opinion; Emelye is free to take or leave the proposition as she so chooses. As a legitimate leader, relying on the trusted counsel of his parliament, Theseus is able to give a true form of *assente*, one that actually asks for Emelye's agreement. This shows that in order for *assente* to be successful in governance and the formation of community, it must truly conform to its definition as reasoned, mutual agreement.

Using *assente* and *juggement* as indicators of community formation, it is clear that Chaucer does not argue that power should solely come from a singular judge. As he demonstrates, human nature left unchecked can result in tyranny. Nor does he advocate for the complete removal of a singular judge—after all, had the individual Harry Bailey not gathered the pilgrims together and proposed his ideas, the storytelling competition and resulting community of the *Canterbury Tales* may never have formed. He does not suggest that power should originate solely from those who vote in the authority figure; not every agreement, no matter how widespread, is guaranteed to be just. Instead of reinforcing the binary of *assente* and *juggement*, Chaucer shows that the ideal community is one which can fuse the two, one in which a just ruler enjoys power because he is just.

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The Witches, Lady Macbeth, and the Impotent Throne

Allison Perrigo, University of West Georgia

Scholarship within the last ten years surrounding William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* largely departs from analysis of the mystical themes within the play, and focuses instead on political analysis or psychoanalysis, to name only a few. Oliver R. Baker's 2005 work concerns fealty specifically focused upon the thanes within their historical context within the play. Seth Clark's 2013 essay analyzes Macbeth's metamorphosis from military general to murderer using the psychoanalytic lens of role confusion. Francesca Cauchi's 2015 work shows a revitalized interest in the play's sense of moral dualism. While these lenses are valid and important to understanding the play in its entirety, they are focused on male action and male speech within the play. This essay concerns female action and female speech specifically linked to witchcraft and lineage concerns. The language of lineal anxiety mingles with the pervasive use of witch-speak within the play. This anxiety stems from the fear of women's sexuality becoming separate from reproduction and entering the political realm, thus making these male-dominated spaces barren through their presence. Kirilka Stavreva defines the term witch-speak as "literally, overspeaking, getting the upper hand in a verbal strife, asserting oneself over one's superior in the social and gender hierarchy" (310). Speech, both masculine and feminine, becomes a form of witchcraft by manifesting superior action in the form of sterility. Using the rhetoric of witch-speak, the figures of the Weïrd Sisters and Lady Macbeth control patriarchal lineage through their renunciation of fertile sexuality, reclaiming their political power by subverting the "natural" order in favor of the unnatural.

In Act 1, Scene 3, the Weïrd Sisters gather together for a meeting where they discuss their witchy deeds and conquests. The speech of the so-named

First Witch creates ties between witchcraft and sexual potency, becoming the first woman within the play to verbally manifest the act of striking a man impotent. After a woman denies the First Witch chestnuts, the witch attacks her husband as retribution. It is important to note that the physical attack may also be a direct attack upon male fertility. To carry out her attack, First Witch announces that she will transform herself, becoming "like a rat without a tail" and will "do, and [I'll] do" (I.iii.9-10). The connection of the rat without a tail may be interpreted as a transformation into a sexual creature lacking a phallus. The lack of a phallus places the sexuality of the witch as rat firmly within a female-centered sexual power structure. Removing masculine sexual symbolism leaves only feminine sexuality and, by extension, grants control over sex and potency to the object of the transformation i.e., First Witch. Rats, whose reputations are linked both to witchcraft and excessive reproduction, further link the figure of the witch with sexual excess. Linking the natural figure of the rat with the unnatural sexual lust of the witch merges the concept of witch as a natural being, an idea certainly supported by the cycle of appearances and disappearances of the witches set in nature rather than a more populated setting. Furthermore, the repetition of the verb "do" in this line references another verb for the sexual act, showing the witch's sexual virility in which she repeatedly "does."

Affording sexual virility to the figure of the witch takes virility from a masculine counterpart. As previously stated, First Witch attacks a sailor sexually as retribution for his wife's denial. She states that she will "drain [the sailor] dry as hay" (I.iii.18). The verb "draining" calls back to the verb "do" as the recipient of the "doing." Draining him refers to a sexual emptying, which she does so through the repetition of the "doing," leaving him "dry" and infertile. The sailor's infertility reflects the denial of lineage, leaving both he and his lineage "dry as hay." Using her powers of speech, she manifests action in the form of promised sexual disruption, robbing the marriage of its potency. This episode influences the main lineal anxiety plot by speaking to the association of witchcraft with the striking of impotence upon marriages and provides precedence within the play of the power of witchspeak manifested upon the sexual realm. B. J. Sokol examines the use of the witch scenes within *Macbeth*, stating, "the witch scenes of *Macbeth* cunningly mix together indications of highly realistic social collisions in this pattern with other more uncanny aspects of witchcraft" (263). While this episode is not made visible within the play, it is significant as it sets the tone for later lineage issues within the play. The social reality of monarchial lineage anxiety melds with those aspects of witchcraft that exacerbated these fears, namely bewitchment in the form of meddling in familial matters as well as the ability to create fruitless marriages.

The scene becomes a pivotal moment of foreshadowing within the play as it shows the breakdown of a relationship similar to that of the main couple, yet far enough removed that it lacks any real consequence within the play. Rather, it shows the effect of magic upon the sexual and political relations of husband and wife—bridging the gap between the two and saming these two seemingly conflicted relations. Dennis Biggins proposes that "the Weïrd Sisters proposed sewing of discord between the spouses [that] looks forward both to Macbeth's murderous acts of discord and to their ultimate issue in barrenness and estrangement between his wife and himself" (260). Immediately following the invocation of *maleficium,* witchcraft used for malintent, Macbeth and Banquo come upon the witches, whereupon Banquo describes the witches in their unsexed state: "you should be women, / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret / That you are" (I.iii.45-47). Marking the witches as oversexed marks the tie between magic and the unsexing of women, and creating the link between magic and the art of unsexing speaks to the idea that feminine fertility must be sacrificed in order to reclaim lineage from masculine hands. The sexual ambiguity of the witches creates a space that divides them from the social constructs surrounding the feminine sex. Bearding the Weïrd Sisters may also serve to highlight the transformation from young and fertile to older and infertile—creating a form of magical menopause.

During the scene, they do not explicitly tell Macbeth that he will have an infertile crown upon his head, implying that the source of the infertility comes from elsewhere, somewhere closer to the lineage. In Act 1, Scene 5, Lady Macbeth receives a letter from her husband detailing his encounter with the Weïrd Sisters and their subsequent prophesying his ascendance to the role of king. Lady Macbeth invokes spirits to fulfill her desire to elevate her household to a monarchical status, proclaiming, "Come, you spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here, / And fill me from the crown to the toe topfull, / Of direst cruelty" (I.v.39-42). Lady Macbeth's words mirror witch rhetoric found within pamphlets and other plays that Shakespeare would have been familiar with at the time. Invoking spirits brings her speech into the magical realm to ensure the unnatural deed of killing their king succeeds. The language of unsexing in this scene strips Lady Macbeth of her feminine status in the sense of childbearing. By ceasing to align herself with a normative body, she relinquishes the duties that come with that body. Similarly, the act of beseeching the spirits to fill her indicates that by filling her with cruelty, she is unable to be filled by a child. She sacrifices the empty space within her meant to house children and bring the spirits forth in favor of power over kingship. The words immediately following concern the bodily space for children as well, stating: "Make thick my blood; / Stop up th'access and passage to remorse, / That no compunctious visitings of nature / Shake my fell purpose" (I.v.42-45). The

use of blood within this line may be understood as menstrual blood. Stopping the flow of the blood ceases the cycle that marks her ability to bear children. Her reference to the "visitings of nature" aligns with language surrounding menstruation, and by commanding that it not distract her from her purpose, it favors power and ambition over feminine nature.

Her desire to prematurely fall into a menopausal state indicates that Lady Macbeth finds a form of power in her ability to cease her own menstrual cycle. She controls her own reproductive abilities, snatching them back from the "natural" beneficiary of such abilities—her husband. Diane Purkiss examines this form of bodily transformation in relation to the witches, stating, "this is the body Lady Macbeth desires for herself: a body that is dried and preserved . . . a body that is a dead end, not capable of multiplying" (45). Desiring a body hardened by witchcraft, Lady Macbeth longs to inhabit a space that is wholly her own and not at the reproductive demand of society. Stephanie Spoto references King James's *Daemonologie* to examine the rebellious role of witchcraft in the play: "James's comparison between witchcraft and adultery demonstrates the connection between sexuality and the disruption of the hierarchy" (55). Lady Macbeth's adultery is formed through giving her body to the spirits in exchange for power.

Her infidelity to body and "natural" order result in the disruption of societal hierarchy—creating a concept of pseudo-monarchy. The pseudo-monarchy lacks real power and becomes impotent. Macbeth, as the inheritor of barren throne, consequently becomes barren himself. Infertility and monarchy become synonymous within the play, aided by feminine bodily disobedience. Further down the passage, Lady Macbeth bids the spirits, "Come to my woman's breasts / And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers" (I.v.46-47). Lady Macbeth offers her fertility to the spirits in exchange for the boldness to commit the act of murder. Exchanging her milk for power through her bargain with the spirits subverts the lineage by reclaiming her womb from patriarchal service. Through striking herself infertile, she is able to ensure the ascension to the throne at the cost of a thriving lineage. The line of "murd'ring ministers" becomes ironic in relation to childbirth as she, herself, becomes a murderer—metaphorically. When attempting to prove her newfound gall and motivate Macbeth into action, she uses the metaphorical murder of a child to prove herself:

I have a given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums
And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn as you
Have done to this. (I.vii. 54-59)

The metaphorical sacrifice of the child not only displays her willing sacrifice of flesh to achieve power, but also plays to the destruction of infant flesh circulating in stories of witchcraft practices at the time. Voicing the sacrifice becomes an invocation in itself as it breathes life into the metaphorical slaying of the babe, creating a missing child in a play obsessed with broken succession.

Gendering the baby as male shows its worth in the monarchical order as he would be directly in line to inherit the throne from his father. This metaphorical slaying parallels the physical slaying of Lady Macduff's sons (IV.ii). As the only other named woman in the play, it is notable the death of her two sons creates tension between a willing and unwilling end of a lineage. Lady Macbeth's childless status conflicts with her utterance as she invokes magic that has no outlet to act within her own family. The metaphorical sacrifice she makes cannot manifest. Yet it, like other forms of witches' speech within the play, must come to pass. I argue that it comes to pass in the form of Macduff's sons' death. It is notable that the sons' deaths are linked to the female characters, placing the political interruption of power within feminine hands.

Similarly, the theme of infanticide pervades the witches' famous cauldron scene (IV.i) where they use not only the body parts of infants to concoct their brew, but also manifest the image of two male children with crowns. The first, the image of the bloody child, correlates to the child whose brains Lady Macbeth dashed. The witches bring his image forward to face the parent who also desired power over a fruitful marriage. Confronting Macbeth with the bloody babe, the witches gleefully announce, "Be bloody, bold, and resolute. Laugh to scorn / The pow'r of man, for none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth" (IV.i.101-03). The witches seem to confirm the identity of the babe as Macbeth's missing metaphorical heir. Scorning the power of man speaks directly to the feminine subversion of male public speech as well as male power within the text. Up to this point, women have had unparalleled control over the actions and speech of men. None of woman born has harmed Macbeth as Lady Macbeth has already harmed the lineage by placing that barren crown upon his head herself. Macbeth has already suffered a domestic death in that his line stagnates and dies with him.

The Weïrd Sisters and Lady Macbeth create a powerful front of female power unheard of in many plays at the time. The depiction of witches favors a natural force of nature—natural in both her femininity and influence over male lineage. Unsexing the female separates them from the image of the womb and grounds them in a political realm, striking impotence into both men and male-dominated spaces. The implication of unsexing Lady Macbeth leads to the question, had she lived, would she also have become one of the bearded women in the marsh, metaphorically and physically

offering the denied child to the spirits for their continued protection against male control? I like to think so.

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Nature vs. Nurture: How the Societies of Elizabeth Sawyer and Her Authors Make Her a Witch

Katherine Bowden, University of West Georgia

In their 1621 play *The Witch of Edmonton*, playwrights Thomas Dekker, John Ford, and William Rowley present a woman judged to be the titular devilish fiend. Elizabeth Sawyer suffers the constant verbal and physical abuse that her neighbors heap upon her because they believe she is a harbinger of witchcraft, and so blame her for their own difficulties. But is she truly a witch, as those around her claim? Or, is her status as a sorceress determined by her society, rather than by her own actions? It appears that authors Dekker, Ford, and Rowley are commenting on their contemporary society's shifting blame from the women accused of witchcraft to the circumstances which may have led those women to being called witches; that commentary manifests itself as their portrayal of Sawyer as being shaped by stereotypes and social ostracization, rather than by actual evidence of coercion with demonic forces.

First, Elizabeth Sawyer's understanding of herself as inferior to her community as expressed in her speech must be examined. As the enemy of her neighbors, Sawyer introduces herself in Act II, scene one, of the play with the following speech:

> I am poor, deformed, and ignorant,
> And like a bow buckled and bent together
> By some more strong in mischiefs than myself,
> Must I for that be made a common sink
> For all the filth and rubbish of men's tongues,
> To fall and run into? Some call me witch,

And, being ignorant of myself, they go
And teach me how to be one. (3-10)

By calling herself "poor, deformed, and ignorant" in her introduction, she makes commentary on both her appearance and her position within the social hierarchy of Edmonton (II.i.3). Sawyer clearly differentiates herself from other characters previously introduced in the play, such as the rich Carter family and the recently-impoverished Thorneys, who still qualify as upper-class on the basis of a marriage that they hope will bring them money. These characters, based on their financial abundance, are considered superior to Sawyer. Her other descriptors, "deformed" and "ignorant," decimate her social position even further (3). Sawyer's claim of ignorance implies that she has a feeble mind, inferior to those in the town with any sort of education. Characters such as the Constable and the Officers have undergone some schooling that grants them the ability to do their jobs faithfully; these working-class men are more knowledgeable than Sawyer, which pushes her even further down the social line. As for other impoverished and uneducated characters who carry the potential to be Sawyer's peers, physical appearance drives a wedge between them and the old woman, who describes herself as "deformed" (3). Though her deformity is not explicitly defined in the play, its placement alongside the descriptors "poor" and "ignorant" make it clear that this illness or misshapenness has as negative an impact on Sawyer's life as her other shortcomings. Her imperfection marks her as an "other" to her neighbors. She is unable to find a place among the wealthy, the educated, or the physically complete, and is excluded from those groups and any group formed by those traits overlapping. Sawyer's isolation from her neighbors, when paired with her low social standing, makes her a likely scapegoat for Edmonton's woes, which nominates her to be the cause of these woes, most commonly identified as a witch.

Sawyer's lack of any friendly bonds with the rest of Edmonton makes her more susceptible to being coerced and controlled by outside forces. In her speech, she likens herself to "a bow buckled and bent together / By some more strong in mischiefs than [her]self" (4-5). This analogy foreshadows Sawyer's eventual involvement with the devil due to her own weakness and inability to bond with others. As the shunned outsider of her community, Sawyer is the common enemy of her neighbors and is therefore given incentive to do evil against them. This, as well as the way that townsfolk ridicule and beat her, makes it significantly easier for her to want to seek revenge with the help of other forces. Before she initially calls upon the devil, Old Banks finds her on his land and, thinking that she is up to something wicked despite his lack of evidence, beats her twice after threatening to "make / [her] bones rattle in [her] skin" (21-22). This interaction leads her to cursing

and calling for otherworldly assistance in seeking justice. As Sarah Johnson notes in "Female Bodies, Speech, and Silence in *The Witch of Edmonton*," Sawyer's "cursing could provide an effective means of retaliation for a victim of injustice who had no recourse to financial or physical means of revenge" if it is "divinely or demonically endorsed" (72). Elizabeth, already having established herself as incapable of monetary or physical reaction, relies on her words and their supposed power to get her revenge on those who mistreat her. Once devilish powers recognize her words as a sign that she requires assistance, Sawyer becomes like the "bow" and bends to the forces of "some more strong in mischiefs than herself," and turns from the influence of her neighbors indefinitely (II.i.4-5). She is now the devil's assistant, ready to do harm to those who have repeatedly harmed her.

Though she has only officially become a witch after being abused by Old Banks, Elizabeth Sawyer's role in the world of Edmonton doesn't change at all; her neighbors do not see any change in her, as they have always believed her to have the powers of Hell at her fingertips. In a way, Sawyer *did* have the power to bring harm to her community: by blaming the woman for everything from devastating calamity to minor inconvenience, and rumoring her to be evil, the townspeople of Edmonton have already established Sawyer's abilities amongst themselves. It seems as if word of mouth is just as powerful as the devil, as they both make Sawyer a witch, though neither requires much physical proof of her involvement. The interaction of the two forces "is simply the actual fulfillment of the polluted-vessel status which others' words have already imposed on Mother Sawyer" (Johnson 75-76). Receiving the power to actually cause harm may seem exciting to Sawyer, but would not shock her neighbors. In fact, the neighbors seem to know more about how to be a witch than Sawyer does. In her speech, she notes that the townsfolk "call [her] witch, / And, being ignorant of [her] self, they go / About teaching [Elizabeth] how to be one . . ." (II.i.8-10). By assuming that Sawyer is behind every disaster and failing to allow her to be equal with themselves, the townsfolk essentially create her identity and history as a witch, though it may not otherwise exist. Within this identity and being blamed lies a lesson for Sawyer: whatever her neighbors accuse her of, is what a witch is capable of. These accusations may serve as her education on witchcraft, just as much as anything Tom the Devil Dog may disclose. Tom's explanation that, through him, she can "kill and mildew" livestock and crops is mirrored by Cuddy Banks' asking for Sawyer to make Kate Carter fall in love with him, during which he tells the witch that he "does verily believe" in her ability to cast such a thing (II.i.163, 232). Both instances include abilities that witches are believed to possess, and present opportunities for Sawyer to learn what she should do as one. Her understanding of what she is now is taught to her by those around her.

Tom the Dog appears to Elizabeth Sawyer just after her self-deprecating rant claiming that he does "love [Sawyer] much too well / To hurt or fright [her]" even though he is, in fact, a representative of the devil, sent when his master heard Sawyer curse her neighbors in anger (II.i.124-25). He presents himself as an ally to Sawyer, who is alienated from all other living creatures until this point. Although Tom is the devil's presence in a play that attempts to write off witchcraft as the byproduct of social punishment, there is reason to believe that his inclusion serves as a greater evil than Sawyer's witchcraft for Dekker, Ford, and Rowley, than it does "as a disappointing retreat by the playwrights into superstition" (Nicol 425). First, it must be noted that the period in which the play is being written is one that believed that "the devil was an active agent of temptation constantly ready to take advantage of the sins produced by social pressures," (Barker 167) and therefore must be present, or else the play risks being dismissed by an audience that insists on the existence of the devil in everyday life. According to Meg Pearson's "A Dog, A Witch, A Play: *The Witch of Edmonton*," Tom's serving as a conduit for any magic that Sawyer may hope to use must also be taken into account. Pearson states that, due to the audience's knowledge of Tom's role in the sorcery taking place throughout the play, "Elizabeth Sawyer becomes something less than a character and something less than a spectator . . . The witch only hears about her work secondhand from the demon himself" (97). Sawyer's role as a witch is diminished when it is made obvious that she has little influence over what Tom does or what happens in Edmonton. Tom not only takes away the responsibility of being a witch from Sawyer, but also enacts the revenge that she will be blamed for of his own accord. By doing so, Tom—and, by extension, the devil—seems more necessary to the plot than Sawyer, and more realistic to the audience than the weak witch she is.

The role of the audience in the writing of *The Witch of Edmonton* must also be considered to understand why the presence of the devil and a witch are necessary, though they may not be as important as first believed. The social climate of London in 1621 was one that surely believed that the devil was real, and in fact was led by King James I, who had recently written and published his *Daemonologie* in 1597. In his "A Performance History of The Witch of Edmonton," Rowland Wymer points out that though the play "seems remarkably adapted to the known interests and opinions of James I," "there is no reason to suppose that the play was specially written for Court performance" (3). This reflects that although James held onto the idea that the devil was omnipresent, that belief did not start nor end with him, and was in fact a widespread one. The playwrights write for the common theatergoer, and use their art to demonstrate the evils at work in the everyday world. The inclusion of the devil "would have been far

indeed from posing a challenge to the play's effective and critical mimesis of ordinary life" in the eyes of the audience, and perhaps was a necessity to entice them to "see through the presentational animal disguise to the devil beyond" and pay attention to the social interactions that brought Sawyer to her trial for witchcraft (Barker 167, 169). Dekker, Ford, and Rowley need the audience to recognize their own complicity in the punishment of witches, and use something as familiar as the devil to draw attention to the consequences of social isolation.

Elizabeth Sawyer, the witch in *The Witch of Edmonton*, is less of a true witch, and more a social pariah, and her treatment as such by her neighbors leads to her eventual commitment to the devil. According to the playwrights, the devil is a part of everyday life and preys on those like Sawyer, which leads to false accusations and the conviction of stereotype-fitting women as witches. The purpose of *The Witch of Edmonton* is then to draw the attention of the audience to the fact that they cause the rise of witchcraft in their community, not the devil's own activeness. By illustrating Sawyer's need of a friend as a result of her mistreatment and exclusion by her town, the dramatists point out that perhaps the outcasts that they create are not truly witches, but instead just a "common sink / For all the filth and rubbish of men's tongues / To fall and run into" (II.i.6-8). If those outcasts lived in a world that accepted the existence of the devil in everything they did before accepting them as their peers, equals, or even fellow human beings, who could blame them for doing as Sawyer does, and attempting to find meaning in something greater than themselves? If society doesn't want them, but is able to fear them, then perhaps that is the only power that these accused witches need, and perhaps that is where they will find solace.

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The Splintering of the Divine
in *The Heavenly Twins*

Taylor Qualls, Armstrong State University

In relation to art as social disruption and the effects of that disruption, in this paper I will discuss Sarah Grand's intent for the novel *The Heavenly Twins* as a case for sexual selection through biological essentialism, which is situated upon a binary. I will present the novel as a success due to its illumination of the effects of environment and how these effects shape the social order, despite the text's failure to deliver Grand's beliefs. With this novel Grand intended to "compound an allopathic pill and gild it so that it would be mistaken for a bonbon and swallowed without a suspicion of its medicinal properties" (xii), and it is in this same spirit I seek to reveal the effects of its medicine. The concept of the sexless or dual-sexed divine opens the novel in the Proem to establish spiritual consciousness as neither male nor female and I will borrow this concept throughout my paper to serve as a unified spiritual and gender spectrum in opposition to a binary.

Due to the radical nature of this text, there have been a diverse range of opinions on the validity and success of the text as part of the social narrative and its ability to be considered art. Marilyn Bonnell discusses its role as art despite its ethical agenda in her article "Sarah Grand and the Critical Establishment: Art For [Wo]man's Sake" and, although she acknowledges its disruption of the masculine epistemological stance that denies the reproduction of cultural ideology, she does not consider it successful due to its inability to be part of the literary canon (143). I disagree with Bonnell and consider its inability to be part of the canon a sign of accomplishment, since it does not reproduce the beliefs of the time. Lauren Simek argues, in her article "Feminist 'Cant' and Narrative Selflessness in Sarah Grand's New Woman Trilogy," that although the novel does not reveal the transformative

effects Grand's politics have upon her characters, it encourages and even teaches readers a sense of ethical selfhood and selflessness as a means to engage with social narratives (363). Anna Maria Jones advocates similarly to Simek in her article, "A Track to the Water's Edge: Learning to Suffer in Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*," that what drives the novel is to show that those stuck within the system of oppression must learn to suffer, not for themselves, but for the good of future generations (222). These views of silence and suffering seem to be a reaction to the reintegration of Evadne and Angelica back into the social order and I agree when Jones suggests that Evadne's plot is "less as adhering to a structure than as imitating a movement" (Jones 237), but question her and Simek's centering of suffering and selflessness over the call to action and challenge to the status quo revealed necessary through the text's silence.

In addition to engaging with the challenge posited by the Frankfurt School to discuss art as a disruption, I use Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity to analyze the text. The construction of gender through repetitive and stylized actions exists as the heart of gender performativity for Butler and "real only to the extent that it is performed" (527). Butler believed that nothing in us was inherent of our gender, only that which we are taught or have cultivated through social means. In her essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," she quotes Simone de Beauvoir saying that "one is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman" (519) revealing all doctrine of constituting acts as able to be reinterpreted to show no stable identity in gender that our actions stem from, but rather something we grow into according to social or internal persuasions. In this light, when observing *The Heavenly Twins* as a text forging a way for sexual selection, it is apparent to see how gender roles placed onto the characters are not only products of a social order, but perpetuated by the continued performance of those roles by women who, as the character Edith puts it, "refuse to know and resist" (304).

The New Woman is a term many sources claim Sarah Grand invented just before the twentieth century as a sexually independent challenge to the idea of marriage as a woman's only option in society. The New Woman was educated and able to engage in "sexual selection," which is the act of selecting sexual partners based on secondary characteristics with the intent to reproduce. These women were most importantly able to challenge, as Elaine Showalter put it in *Sexual Anarchy,* "male supremacy in art, the professions, and the home" (38). Showalter discusses the novelist Mona Caird's series of columns for the *London Daily Telegraph* in 1888 called "Is Marriage a Failure?" in which she argued that marriage as an institution was based on the economic dependence of the wife and that it "restricted the freedom of both sexes" (39). The presence of the New Woman shed light onto the

power dynamic created by a system dependent on the gender binary to maintain dominance. Due to the New Woman's continued evolution, the New Man rose to reify gendered roles back into an administered society. The New Man served to balance the evolved woman back into a form consumable by male dominated society through marriage and traditional gender structures. A problem within the New Woman's method Continued use of a binary system within the New Woman's method remained a problem that allowed them to revert male to female superiority in "self sacrifice for the good of the species" and envision "themselves as chaste yet maternal heralds of a higher race" (45). Their perpetuation of a hierarchical system in which one sex is dominant over or more capable than the other came from using the same social system, rather than casting out the old, which is largely why I do not deem Grand's intent for the novel to be as radical as the text she produced.

The Heavenly Twins opens with a Proem that establishes the presence of a chime from the "high Cathedral tower" every hour to the people of Morningquest. The chime is first described as "the solemn assurance" that floats to be "a warning, or a promise, according to the mental state of those whose ears it filled" (x) and its presence serves not only as a universal constant throughout the novel, but also as a consistent disruption within the narrative that characters and readers alike are pushed to experience. The Proem claims that "the great masculine idea" was being threatened because of the presence of a new voice described as "not his, the voice of man; but theirs, the collective voice of humanity" who claimed to be the "male and female principles which together created the universe" (xliii). The chime serves as a constant reminder of the collective voice that is seen through the divine, neither male nor female, as a spiritual aspect to the gender equality that might replace the presence of male dominance embedded in Victorian ideology. The union described in the Proem that is thought to have created the universe is able to be represented by the marriage union if viewed through the time's current social conditions, which I will illustrate through character analysis of Evadne and Dr. Gailbrath as two extremes of a binary, or the union of the masculine and feminine within one body, rather than two, seen through the presence of the heavenly twins, Angelica and Diavolo, who establish the filling of a spectrum.

Evadne's relationship to education is a strong tool for Grand's challenge on the role of the ignorant woman, to show the abilities a woman could possess and as a means of power as protection and currency in the masculine realm. Evadne is portrayed as eager to learn and to know, capable of engaging and understanding a range of topics. Not only is she naturally bright and inclined to absorb all that she encounters, but willing to seek knowledge and education after the accustomed age of women's education

because "she wanted to know . . . And this is not of design, but of necessity. It was a need of her nature to know" (3). From the first sentence, Grand establishes the actions necessary to understand things as they truly are rather than how people assume them to be by putting "prejudice aside in order to see beneath it." The usage of "design" and "nature" (3) are mentioned to raise questions to the validity of social design or gendered roles, where these designs come from, and the reality of inherent nature for humans and sexed bodies. These are topics Grand approaches as a means to her argument, but does not venture beyond establishing a social design her female characters are able to veer from to illustrate how nature is dictated and potentially updated by necessity. It seems like the next logical progression for Grand's argument would have been that since nature expands along with necessity, the design created by social order too expands to fit the shifting necessity, but this argument is not seen within the *The Heavenly Twins*. Instead, even after Evadne and Angelica, who I will discuss below, refuse to perform the mechanics of Victorian women's gender roles, the design within the text remains stagnant even as the need for its expansion reveals itself.

Although her desire for education revealed inconsistencies in the social order from a young age, Evadne's study of medicine allows her to make an informed selection of sexual partner on her wedding day, which serves as the first disruption within the social realm that her education allows her to take power. Early on, Evadne concludes that "withholding education from women was the original sin of man" (23) and it is this observation that allows Evadne the power to understand the oppressive system in which she exists. When Evadne leaves Major Colquhoun after their wedding, he deduces that she is "worse than mad. She's clever. You can do something with a mad woman; you can lock her up; but a clever woman's the devil" (103). The withholding of education to women had nothing to do with their inability to engage with topics or handle mental stimulation, but rather with the loss of power the masculine sphere experienced at the hands of educated women. When a woman understood her surroundings she had the power to change them or establish her own terms, as seen when Evadne agrees to live with Major Colquhoun, but not as his wife. If women became educated, men would be unable to keep them in the dark of realities that affect their autonomy and health, therefore unable to perpetuate marriage, syphilitic or not, the binary, and, as a result, capitalism. Gendered roles that perpetuate the binary depend upon each sex possessing specific traits that the other is unable to access, which elevates marriage as a means to attain wholeness. If women were not inherently less intelligent than men, then there would be nothing to assure their dependence on men.

The role of education in Grand's text simultaneously serves as a case against biological essentialism as seen through environmental effects, only

as far as it serves to elevate women, and for essentialism to advance her beliefs in sexual selection, which placed men in a space of degradation. Mary Poovey asserts in her book, *Uneven Developments,* that "instead of accepting the notion that 'instincts' and a 'natural' difference between the sexes delineate social roles" she marks "the historical specificity of this concept of nature, to point out the place it occupies in the assumptions by which the Victorian middle classes governed their lives." She "assume[d] that the representation of biological sexuality, the definition of sexual difference, and the social organization of sexual relations are social, not natural, phenomena" (2). Referring back to the term "design," the text engages with the concept of gender roles created and embedded within a social order, which Grand intentionally upsets through both Evadne's and Angelica's relationship to education. Their ability to learn and think critically is evidence towards the effects of environment throughout development and the abilities people can cultivate no matter their sex or gender, but Grand does not allow this narrative to progress past showing her main characters' abilities. At the end of the second book "A Maltese Miscellany," Evadne returns from hearing the news of Edith's projected marriage to a man carrying syphilis and discusses the matter with her husband, Major Colquhoun. After Evadne expresses how "detestable" she finds the marriage, Major Colquhoun agrees that he finds it "a pity" himself, but he accepts Edith's fate to be infected with syphilis because of what Evadne identifies as "the system" (238). While Grand uses this upset of social order as a tool in the text to show that nature is not inherent to biology, in the same breath she uses the social design's stagnation as reasoning behind the characters' inability to change the outcome of situations to show the importance of biology and its selection. Sexual diseases aside, if Grand allowed her exploration of environmental effects to continue it would have blatantly invalidated her argument to cultivate a higher race.

Although there is debate regarding the translation of sexual selection to theories of eugenics within Grand's text, her avoidance to conclude the text's exploration of environmental effects to maintain the importance of biology illuminates a centering of eugenics. Angelique Richardson discusses the diversity of conversation within this topic in her article, "The Eugenization of Love: Sarah Grand and the Morality of Genealogy," in which she posits that biological essentialism was "central to the social and political agenda of a number of New Women writers as they situated themselves in the cross-fire of the debates on national health and heredity." Richardson also believed that "Grand's enthusiasm for eugenics perpetuates biological essentialism in its most powerful form" (228). Evadne comments in the sixth book "The Impressions of Dr. Galbraith," that her late husband Colonel Colquhoun "should never have been born. With his ancestry, he must have come into

the world foredoomed to a life of dissipation and disease" (662), which is not only the view of someone advocating for sexual education and selection to protect women from male dominated society, but also a view that one's biology dictates their potential success in the world. New Women's centering of biology as a result of reversing an oppressive system serves to successfully eliminate male power and elevate female superiority for the sake of stability in an already-shifting movement. The novel's inconsistencies regarding the role of biology and environment do not allow for a persuasive case as the text disagrees with itself on the same issues it depends on to carry its argument forward, which I will discuss further regarding Angelica.

Evadne's entrance into the social realm at Malta serves as the last time she contemplates her continued resistance to the status quo before allowing her reintegration into the system. Within this section of the book, she observes the "combination of circumstances which placed [her] in the midst of a community where she must meet the spirit of evil face to face continually . . . forced her to develop her own strength by steady and determined resistance" (217). Her refusal to integrate with a social realm that does not align with her beliefs establishes her ability as a free thinker, but, with little support from those around her, the truth of her thoughts eventually becomes the pressure that pushes her to be reified. Mr. Price is one of the few characters in the text besides Evadne and Angelica that observes the injustices that are bred within the time's current social structure. He serves as a small voice urging others to "try and realize the difference between the position and powers of judgment of women" and "of the hard battles they had to fight for every inch of the way they have made" (217). Outside of Diavolo, he is the only male who acknowledges "the desperate resolution with which they have stood their ground, always advancing, never receding" identifying the issue as "the submission business" (217). Mr. Price is able to acknowledge these issues as a male person in a dominant space while others, such as Dr. Galbraith, do not, but the presence of this male voice serves as a danger due to his ability to identify issues within a system while still existing as part of the power dynamic he criticizes. Men's ability to observe injustices that do not affect them allows them space to not view themselves as part of the problem.

Evadne's eventual abandonment of her books and outspoken nature shows the effects of both social and domestic environments upon the bodies and minds of female characters and their inability to perform the accepted role of their gender while maintaining radical views. In the sixth book, the doctor's view allows an observant perspective on the way Evadne connects with her surroundings and at times the way her body responds to these surroundings. He observes that she spends the majority of her time "with her little work-table beside her, embroidering" for he "never saw her reading,

and there were no books about the room" (584). When he asks why she is unable to draw she responds that she is "an example of how much we owe to early influences . . . I have the talent both for drawing and painting in me, but it remains latent for want of cultivation" (584). In this context, Evadne is able to note the impressions our early experiences have upon our development and what we choose to cultivate.

Both Evadne and Angelica, as they allow their reintegration into the social order, began to beg, "no, don't ask me to think!" Evadne claims that all her "endeavour is not to think" so she can "live on the surface of life, as most women do" settling her fate to "do nothing but attend" to her "household duties and the social duties" of her position (672). The ability to understand the oppressive plight of women was too much for both Evadne and Angelica to continue experiencing while no steps to change circumstances were taken. While the doctor is able to assess the effects Evadne's home life has upon her mental and physical health by checking the temperature of the house and whether or not the sun is able to come through the window, he is unable to understand the effects the social order has upon her ability to thrive physically and mentally.

Because of Dr. Galbaith's attention to detail and observant nature into the quality of life of those around him, he elevates himself to a kind of savior to Evande's situation. The sixth book, solely from his perspective and dedicated to his "impressions" as seen in the title, begins discussing his puzzlement with Evadne because of his ability to "class a woman's character" and "gauge her propensities for good or evil" and his inability to easily assess Evadne creates a deep curiosity in him (555). His interest in her begins with her unusual way of socializing, an observation "that she was eminently qualified to have excelled . . . her natural bent . . . in that direction, but something had changed it" (556). Because Dr. Galbraith views Evadne as stunted in her true potential, he creates a situation in which to save her from an environment and a man that does not allow the cultivation of her abilities, but does this without seeing the power he takes by inserting himself into her life. He observes later in a letter to Lady Adeline that their home is "the gloomiest house in the neighborhood" and he fancies "Colonel Colquhoun took it to suit his own convenience without consulting his wife's tastes or requirements," but that he fears "she will feel it" for she is a "fragile little creature" (566). By considering himself a solution to the troubles Evadne experiences in her marriage to Colonel Colquhoun, he creates a power dynamic around the patient-doctor relationship that more similarly resembles the child-parent relationship since it exists outside of the examination room.

Dr. Galbraith's desire to fix Evadne puts her in the realm of infantilization in which he assumes his existence necessary for the success of hers, which

perpetuates a power dynamic where he considers her an equal only to the point that she needs him. The infantilization of Evadne begins as soon as Dr. Galbraith's interest is piqued by her, but remains in an unactualized form until they enter a legally bound marriage that gives him dominance over her. Throughout their marriage, Galbraith, for the good of her health, dictates her actions and claims that "everything I wished her to do seemed to be a pleasure to her; and mind and body grew rapidly so vigorous that I lost all fear for her" (660). At one point he tells her to go "to bed now, my sweet-heart . . . and no more nonsense of this kind, you know" (666), completely dismissing her emotional responses as nonsense like one might to a child. When their child is born, Dr. Galbraith observes that "it was beautiful to see her raptures" for "she was like a child herself, so unaffectedly glad in her precious little treasure" (667). Later on in their marriage, Evadne discovers that he was "asked the other day how many children . . . [he] had" and he answered "'two or three'" (675), considering herself as one of his children. Because of the care Dr. Galbraith has for Evadne, she does not see the power dynamic succumbed to in their relationship since he himself does not see the very power dynamics embedded in the social structure.

As her health returns in her former husband's absence, it is implied that Galbraith saves her life not only because of his medical attention to her mental health, but also in the freedom she experiences in their sexual relationship. Although it was radical at the time for fiction to acknowledge the presence of female sexuality as an active force rather than merely a presence for male sexuality, it reinforces the power dynamic yet again when Evadne's health suffers in a celibate marriage, yet flourishes when Dr. Galbraith is able to offer her sexual pleasure. It feels counter-intuitive within the text for female sexuality's claim to power to be hinged upon the necessity of a man to make it possible, reestablishing the same dynamic it works to tear down. Again, this is the main point of contention I hold with Grand's redistribution of power within the text. It seems that in Evadne's attempt to forget her education for peace of mind, she also loses her ability to perform her gender and, as her health again begins to suffer, it is apparent that her immediate environment is not the only factor that plays into her ability to experience strong health, but also the larger social realm that dictates her home environment.

By causing division, or the engagement of two extremes, the binary not only depends upon a power dynamic able to create an "other," as seen through both gender and class hierarchies within the text, but also establishes a social environment able to dictate and replicate itself from macro to micro spaces such as the social and domestic spheres. While Evadne was able to cultivate her intelligence within the realm of childhood, her disruptive stances are unable to thrive within the marriage dynamic established in the

social sphere even to a man conscious of her well-being. Dr. Galbraith says in the last sentence of the book that he "should not lose the little all I ask for now—the power to make her life endurable" (679), because the same way he views Evadne as needing of him, he needs her to need him just as much. Dr. Galbraith is unable to see how his obsessively attentive nature towards her health takes away her agency as an autonomous human being, finely illustrated by the fact that the sixth book, told from his perspective alone, is the only book in the novel that does not possess the presence of the chime. It is not only that Dr. Galbraith does not understand the damage of the dominant masculine at the time, but it is also as if he does not even hear the sexless or dual-sexed divine that which could reveal these injustices to him.

Diavolo represents the New Man of the time as an evolved partner to the New Woman instead of Dr. Galbraith. While Galbraith attempts to claim the space as a New Man, his need to dominate Evadne creates a power dynamic in which neither of them are able to attain wholeness without the opposite extreme to their end of a splintered spectrum, which resembles the old marriage structure rather than a new partnership. Diavolo performs perfectly as the New Man in his ability to function as his own individual, not hinged upon the domination of Angelica. Diavolo objects, in a conversation with his grandfather, "the way . . . [men] sneaked and snivelled about women's faults, as if they had none of their own" (272), observing that men say women are "a great evil *because* men squander away the wealth of their houses upon them. If the men were such superior beings, why don't they show it somehow?" He refuses to condone "all this abuse" that men cast upon the heads of women, referring to it as "beastly bad form whichever way you look at it" (273). The fact that Diavolo is partner and sibling to Angelica rather than husband, like Dr. Galbraith to Evadne, allows equal power within the relationship of a New Man and Woman.

The heavenly twins are able to interact with and cultivate the traits ascribed to the other twin's gender role within the connection they share throughout their development and as a result of this relationship they develop a sexless or dual-sexed experience of the world. Angelica explains how she "got his mind and he got" hers when they insist they are unable to learn from tutors of the same sex as them and they are only able to do the other's assigned school lessons because, as she puts it, "the fact of the matter is that *I* am Diavolo and *he* is me" (124). When their father questions Angelica's complaints of lesser quality education asking what good it would do for her, "just as much use as they will to Diavolo" she answers, "he doesn't know half as much about the good of education as I do" (125). And since Grand was still using the twins as mouthpieces for what she viewed as an elevated task, it is easy to see how she reverses the twins' gendered

roles, allowing Angelica to be in charge, rather than allowing equal power between them.

Beyond exhibiting the traits of their twin's assumed gender, both Diavolo and Angelica are able to remain in an ambiguous space until they are assimilated into society when they are expected to perform the acts of their gender. A good example of this is when their grandfather attempts to engage with Diavolo regarding his growth, to which Diavolo insists that Angelica is growing much faster. "'Women mature earlier,' his grandfather says. 'But their minds never get far beyond the first point at which they arrive,'" to which Diavolo replies "'I suppose you mean when they marry at seventeen, or their education is otherwise stopped short for them, just when a man is beginning his properly?'" (259). Because he exists in a neutral space without engaging in the gender hierarchy, Diavolo is able to shed light onto the reality of many gendered roles to other men in the novel due to the gendered space these men hold him in.

While Diavolo is able to impact the masculine sphere with his androgynous perspective before he is sent to school to perform his role, Angelica resists the lack of freedom her transition into the woman's role presents by crossdressing as her brother and engaging in a relationship with a man in "The Tenor and The Boy - An Interlude." When her identity as Angelica is revealed to the tenor, she discusses the benefit she enjoyed of "free intercourse" with the tenor's "masculine mind undiluted" by "masculine prejudices." She argues that the fault is in men's training for they are all "educated deliberately to think of women chiefly as the opposite sex" (458). The freedom she experienced in her relationship with the tenor allowed an equal footing for them to engage upon, but it is suddenly extinguished after revealing what a woman is capable of. Within this section of the novel, the effects of environment are easily seen both in the ways Angelica was able to transform herself to work within the demands of the environment and also the pain it causes when one attempts to go against the established social system. In the fifth book, Angelica begins, "so irksome did she find the purposeless existence which the misfortune of having been born a woman compelled her to lead" (469). Grand reveals her beliefs of biological essentialism when she has Angelica mourn being "born" a woman, but I believe that due to the interlude between childhood and adulthood, Angelica resists becoming a woman the majority of the novel, and only succumbs to this identity in the fifth book.

Infantilization works as a method of orientation in the fifth book, "Mrs. Kilroy of Ilverthorpe," for Angelica's reintegration into the social sphere, not only as a woman, but also as a wife. After the death of the tenor, Angelica decides she is no longer able to live her married life on her own terms, leaving her husband to fend for himself on an emotional and romantic level.

By throwing herself into her husband's arms and kissing him she cries out, "don't let me go again, Daddy, keep me close. I am—I am grateful for the blessing of a good man's love" (551), pushing herself to let go of her own agency and power to properly resemble a Victorian wife. Infantilization is a method I discussed previously in this paper as a means for Dr. Galbraith to control Evadne, but the difference here is that Angelica uses this method against herself and her husband to orient herself into the realm of the wife. Angelica reveals power reversal here when she takes power by willingly giving up the power she possessed, exposing what I believe to be the most self-aware power play within the text.

Since Grand's task was not to establish equality amongst all people, but rather to advocate education for women as better suited marriage partners, her argument surrounding biological essentialism remains shifting, unable to find a stable point. While both of these movements center the inequality of all beings, the difference between eugenics and sexual purity lies in one group's beliefs that genetic purity comes from one's biology or lineage regardless of the environmental effects one has been influenced by. The other believes that a woman's education could protect them from engaging with people who would infect them or their future lineage. Angelique Richardson states that "eugenic discourse is mobilized [in the text] primarily to counter masculine sexual privilege" (184), again highlighting the power reversal Grand's argument depended upon that eventually foiled her own argument; for biological essentialism cannot be true in one situation and false in another. Although both ways of thinking ignore the equality of all beings, sexual purists at least engaged with the understanding that purity is not inherent to biology, but rather is affected positively or negatively by its environment and lifestyle. In this way, Evadne's story presents a case for eugenics, as she does not feel towards herself or her first husband that there was a chance for their situations to have been different due to their bloodline. Angelica, as part of a unified spiritual spectrum, fights for her choice until the very moment she allows her reintegration.

Unique in function is the splintering found within the text in its ability to simultaneously support and deny capitalism, the same way it supports and denies gendered roles, marriage, and the binary. Its double natured method is quite brilliant in how it mimics the very systems it works to tear down since capitalism and other systems of power thrive off of the dual function able to move power away from the oppressed. Through the exposures of these roles as tools of capitalism, a unified spectrum of power revealed through the heavenly twins exists in opposition to binary modes of oppression. Grand's double-sided argument was key to both its ability to expose and its ability to be received and published as a radical work of fiction. The flaws in Grand's argument suggest that she was splintered by

her own argument as she brought this being to life, for I consider Grand's own opinion to have shifted on the perpetuation of ideology.

While deviation from the social standard served as a tool for Grand to elevate ideas of female superiority, I am thankful that the nature of art and literature remain shifting in form and essence to allow a distinction between intention and reception. Despite Grand's message, I believe in the radical nature of the text's silence and portrayal of autonomous female characters' reintegration back into the social order as the work's strongest social critique. The portrayal of gender equality before these women are forced back into an oppressive system serves as a greater shock and disturbance to both Victorian and modern readers. While binary power structures continue to function, we still work to uproot what Grand was able to reveal as unnatural and oppressive. No distinction of essence exists between sexes and their gender performance and it is through the splintering of the divine into sexed bodies that establishes the replicated structure by which we are divided and oppressed.

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Education in Frances E. W. Harper's *Iola Leroy*: Antebellum Feminization and the Un-Teaching of Race

Chyna Gowan, University of West Georgia

Post-Antebellum educational methods present rapid shifts in educational history that help uncover the unrest within Civil War Era classrooms. Not only did the number of classrooms and students increase in both Southern and Northern states during the Civil War and Reconstruction, but the gender of educators also shifted from male to female. In the late eighteenth century, pre-Antebellum, educators were predominantly male and schoolrooms were run by farmers or church groups. Furthermore, the race majority within these classrooms was Caucasian—with African Americans receiving little to no exposure to education. However, from 1840 to 1880, freed slaves received more academic freedom and the influx of female educators provided more independence for women in the profession. Through the Port Royal Experiment, beginning in South Carolina in 1862, freed slaves were taught literacy, economic independence, and civil rights. In addition, the Hampton Institute, founded in Virginia in 1868, provided one of the first schools teaching manual skills to freed slaves. Simultaneously, a process called feminization permeated educational practices. Females dominated Civil War Era classrooms, and society preferred female educators to male educators because they believed women were better moral teachers. Through this dynamic movement, women became better educated than before ("Only A Teacher").

This rapid educational shift within the nineteenth century informs the theme of racial injustice within Frances E. W. Harper's *Iola Leroy*. Harper's novel discusses issues such as female educators, African American education post-Civil War, and the freedom that education ultimately brings both identities. The character of Iola Leroy symbolizes not only the feminization

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within the educational system during the mid-1800s, but also the appearance of African American female educators within emancipated America. Although Iola was raised to embrace her whiteness—with a white slave-owning father and a quarter-black slave mother—she chooses to embrace her one-eighth blackness. This embracing of her true self fuels her inclination to teach others. Her passion for teaching drives the novel's plot, as does her chosen identity as African American—despite her white and privileged past. She not only identifies herself after a childhood of believing otherwise, but she also teaches tolerance and unity between both races. This culmination, ultimately, signifies the concept of race as a social construct.

The underlying theme of literacy as an agent of escape helps approach the question of race as a social construct, or more broadly, race as an instructional method. Harper highlights the potency of literacy and education within the slave narrative by using a mirrored version of her life, through the character of Iola Leroy, to encourage a mental shift in the ways that readers view racial identity. This wrestling with the understanding of race's link to society and education during the Civil War Era pushes Harper's narrative. To an extent Harper is Iola Leroy. She writes during a time saturated with racism and hungry for change. In "Raising Voices, Lifting Shadows: Competing Voice-Paradigms in Frances E. W. Harper's *Iola Leroy*," James Christmann asserts that "African-American authors wrote in an era when issues surrounding black class and progress were highly charged. They lived in a nation that asked African Americans either to submit to continued subjugation or to prove themselves worthy of white recognition and assistance" (10). Iola challenges both views. She neither complies to further oppression, nor attempts to make herself seem "worthy of white recognition." She completely abolishes both notions of black success by existing as a strong black female and an intelligent educator.

Through the symbols of a fire, spectacles, shadows, and faces, Frances E. W. Harper urges a nation to reevaluate this "continued subjugation" through education and knowledge to reconstruct race. While the theory requires the construction of race, it also requires the opposite process of deconstructing race. Iola Leroy uses her passion for teaching to introduce a reinvented way of education for young African Americans, and, similarly, the process of deconstructing race lies within the ability to reconstruct education. Just as the Civil War must be followed by the period of Reconstruction, a period of re-teaching must follow the destruction of race-centered ideas.

For Iola, this deconstruction, followed by a reconstruction, begins with the burning of her schoolroom. Through the ashes of a tangible symbol of education, she rises to address the issue of race. Iola recounts the evils of this event, while also realizing the hope that remains:

> The school was soon overcrowded with applicants, and Iola was forced to refuse numbers, because their quarters were too cramped. The school was beginning to lift up the home, for Iola was not satisfied to teach her children only the rudiments of knowledge. She had tried to lay the foundation of good character. But the elements of evil burst upon her loved and cherished work. One night the heavens were lighted with lurid flames, and Iola beheld the school, the pride and joy of her pupils and their parents, a smouldering ruin . . . While she sat, mournfully contemplating the work of destruction, her children . . . sang . . . As they sang, the tears sprang to Iola's eyes, and she said to herself, "I am not despondent of the future of my people; there is too much elasticity in their spirits, too much hope in their hearts, to be crushed out by unreasoning malice." (Harper 119)

Iola's school was "overcrowded with applicants," urging the need for eager minds willing to obliterate past definitions of race and the prevalence of racial prejudice. This overflow of people encourages the elimination of "unreasoning malice" within the obvious minority who begrudges this shift. The "elasticity" and "hope" of Iola's students symbolize the type of heart that must accompany the deconstruction and reconstruction of racial identity. The burning of Iola's schoolroom also figuratively signifies the disintegration of past education and worldviews to make room for new processes and ideals. Since "Iola was not satisfied to teach her children only the rudiments of knowledge," Harper insinuates educational methods that include the mental eradication of race-related oppression. "Her children . . . sang" in the face of oppression instead of crying because the burning of the school emotionally signifies a rebirth instead of a death. This rebirth begins with her children seeing a new beginning and rejoicing as she mourns the "smouldering ruins." Iola's "school was beginning to lift up the home," so the reformed minds of her students not only informed their own newfound structure, but also their families' structures. This introduces Harper's idea of intergenerational reform.

The deconstruction of race and reconstruction of education must start first within young minds in order to permeate the traditions of the home. Iola even realizes that "some of the old folks were eager to learn . . . the eyes which had grown dim under the shadows of slavery, donn[ed] spectacles and tr[ied] to make out the words" (Harper 118-19). This sudden ability for the old, as well as the young, to see more clearly highlights the novel's subtitle: *Shadows Uplifted.* John Ernest, in "From Mysteries to Histories: Cultural Pedagogy in Frances E. W. Harper's *Iola Leroy*," supports this notion by stating, "Throughout the nineteenth century, shadows were often

lifted from previously limited minds, as veils were lifted from figurative eyes. But one can see in this subtitle something else as well, for 'shadows' was also, at least by the late nineteenth century, a derogatory slang term used by whites in reference to African Americans" (502). Iola's revolution-ary educational methods incite literal insight and knowledge in terms of reading comprehension, but her methods also incite the figurative lifting of shadows. Physically, this manifests in the form of "shadows . . . lifted from previously limited minds," in terms of education, but figuratively this assumption suggests the total restructure of outward appearance, in terms of race. The students, young and old, re-learn their existence and gain a new way of viewing themselves outwardly.

This process of deconstructing views of appearance within the African American community of Harper's novel highlights the potency of education in the lives of the same community. This idea grows through the outward appearance of Iola Leroy. Harper highlights the hospitality and overall pres-ence of Iola when she opens her school:

> When Iola opened her school she took pains to get acquainted with the parents of the children, and she gained their confidence and co-operation. Her face was a passport to their hearts. Ignorant of books, human faces were the scrolls from which they had been reading for ages. They had been the sunshine and shadow of their lives. (Harper 118)

Harper, again, utilizes the symbol of a shadow to address the past and the old way of considering race that clung so tightly to the African American mindset. She reiterates the generational access to this newfound view of race by explaining her own process of knowing students and parents equally. This highlights the barriers of both physical appearance and age losing the power that education now holds for Iola's community. "Her face was a passport to their hearts," and since Iola represents the face of education within the novel, this equates outward appearance with education (Harper 118). The com-parison insinuates a larger assumption that education informs and shapes outward appearance, especially skin color. "Human faces were the scrolls from which they had been reading for ages," and Iola's face holds promise and growth for her students and the future (Harper 118). And since they read faces instead of books before Iola, their shift into the joys of education through her symbolizes the ease in which reexamining race happens when focus shifts from the outward appearance to the inward state of the mind.

This inward state of the mind is the catalyst by which Iola's school starts. Iola shifts her thinking and acknowledges the ignorance within the minds of the African American community because of the confines of race:

> "How would you like to teach?" asked the Doctor. "Schools are
> being opened all around us. Numbers of excellent and superior
> women are coming from the North to engage as teachers of the
> freed people. Would you be willing to take a school among these
> people? I think it will be uphill work. I believe it will take genera-
> tions to get over the duncery of slavery. Some of these poor fellows
> who came into our camp did not know their right hands from their
> left, nor their ages, nor even the days of the month." (Harper 118)

The Doctor's question of "how" Iola wants to teach instead of "what" or
"why" symbolizes the methods and instruction of Iola's lessons. T-his fur-
ther supports the notion that one of her methods, following her choice
to identify as African American, includes the restructuring of racial ideas.
Iola's "how" signifies a larger conversation including the process of decon-
structing race. This "uphill work" insinuates an eradication of "the duncery
of slavery," which includes ending the outward differences of whites and
blacks. Throughout this passage, Harper never refers to African Americans
as "blacks" or "slaves." Instead, she calls them "freed people," which assumes
not only a freeing of the body, but also a freeing of the mind. However,
Harper is not foregoing the consideration of race and culture entirely. As
Michele Birnbaum states, in "Racial Hysteria: Female Pathology and Race
Politics in Frances Harper's *Iola Leroy* and W. D. Howells's *An Imperative
Duty*," "The act of racial confession . . . reveals how easily the door can close
on white authority" (12). Just as Iola Leroy choses her African American
identity after being raised as a white person, Birnbaum asserts the claim-
ing of racial identity, regardless of outward appearance, erases the power
of racial prejudice. The realization that "some of those poor fellows . . .
did not know their right hands from their left" also supports this idea of
the deconstruction of race and reconstruction of education because they
cannot distinguish their outward identity until someone teaches them,
which highlights the importance of Iola's duty as a teacher to teach hope
to a people that has long lost it.

Ultimately, through Iola's teaching methods, Frances E. W. Harper sug-
gests the fluidity of race. Iola herself being a symbol of the power of educa-
tion highlights its ability to restructure entire identities and communities.
She shows this through the burned schoolroom, which symbolizes the
commencement of the destruction of previous ideals in the face of inten-
tional teaching of not only academic skills, but cultural and social iden-
tity as well. Since shadows within the 19th century figuratively symbolized
African Americans, Iola's lifting of those shadows through education and
Harper's acknowledgment of those shadows through her subtitle of the
novel, addresses the abandonment of preconceived notions of race and

identity. This revolutionary idea that drives the appearance of education within *Iola Leroy* proves the ability to deconstruct and reconstruct racial identity. The symbol of Iola's face informing the hope that her students feel equates racial identity not with skin color but with the power of the mind and the hopefulness of the thoughts within it.

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"Benjy's Time" in Faulkner's
The Sound and the Fury

Joelma Sambdman, University of North Georgia

Time has been, is, and will always be a mystery that science attempts to explain, and humankind continues to interpret both palpably and abstractly. When writing fiction, authors often conceptualize time. Nobel Prize winner Thomas Mann addressed time in his foundational work *The Magic Mountain* (1924): "Can one tell, that is to say, narrate time, time, itself, for its own sake? That would surely be an absurd undertaking. It would be as though one held a single note or chord for a whole hour and called it music. For narration resembles music in this, that it fills up the time. For time is the medium of narration, as it is the medium of life." Mann joins the conversation with physicists, philosophers, and psychologists, such as Albert Einstein, Jean-Paul Sartre, and William James, who continue to examine the dichotomy between *chronological* and *imagined time*.

The first concept of time stands chronological and linear: time that can be measured in seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, or years. *Imagined time*, however, does not follow any logical sequence of events; it only exists in the world of fiction writing. Although literature embraces all things abstract and subliminal, authors often deal with both *chronological* and *imagined time*, sometimes allowing the two types of time to converge, whereas literary critics often analyze time as a tool for constructing a narrative. This essay focuses on the concept of *imagined time* that William Faulkner develops in *The Sound and the Fury*, which portrays the demise of an aristocratic Southern family, the Compsons, who live in Faulkner's imaginary Yoknapatawpha County. Benjy Compson has a mental disorder, and his condition reveals Faulkner's stylistic choices. More specifically, I argue that Faulkner invents a cyclical concept of imagined time in *The Sound and*

the Fury, referenced herein as "Benjy's Time." This concept of time results from Benjy's contrasting perceptions of objects, places, and sensory stimuli.

The Sound and the Fury consists of four sections. The first three sections represent the point of view of the three brothers: Benjy, Quentin, and Jason Compson. Each brother in this Southern family narrates a section in the first-person voice; however, a third-person narrator voices the fourth section. Benjy was born with mental impairments, Quentin is a suicidal Harvard freshman, and Jason, the eldest, claims to have made many sacrifices for the sake of the family and the happiness of his other brothers. Benjy narrates the first section — "April Seventh, 1928" — which occurs on the Sabbath of Hallelujah, or the Saturday preceding Easter Sunday, eighteen years after the events divulged by Quentin in the next section, "June Second, 1910." The third section corresponds to Holy Friday —," or the Friday before Passover, and features Jason's perspective, narrating the events taking place on that day, which is one day before Benjy's section. The narrator in the fourth section speaks mainly from Dilsey's perspective, exposing the life of the Compson family on Easter Sunday, "April Eighth, 1928." Throughout the novel, Faulkner offers an innovative time narrative that is unique in its treatment of the symbolism of time, expressly in the section, "April Seventh, 1928," often referred to as "Benjy's section."

Benjy's mental retardation allows him to experience the events in his life differently than the other characters, which makes Benjy the perfect voice of Faulkner's experimentation with time narrative. Faulkner surpasses the mode of "stream-of-consciousness" to construct a narrative that exploits *imagined time*, which is the only temporal notion that Benjy possesses. Because Benjy Compson is a thirty-three-year-old man trapped in the mind of a three-year-old child, he does not comprehend linear time. In the "Fore-word" of the 2012 Modern Library Edition of *The Sound and the Fury*, Marilynne Robinson hypothesizes:

> [Because Faulkner] give[s] over a quarter of his book . . . to the point of view of an 'idiot,' a nonverbal character . . . who has no sense of time or of cause and consequence, [one would assume that] at the very outset Faulkner would seem to have deprived himself of elements of narrative that are most essential to it. (ix)

However, Faulkner has no interest in writing a chronological time narrative; instead, he writes using Benjy's Time which exists within Benjy's sensory ability that may only be known to the "idiot" and to people similar to Benjy. Philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre argues that "Benjy's acceptance of temporal experience [yields to] the idiot's ability to accept the present [which in turn] enables him to possess the past and future as well. The very form of

his monologue indicates that he can move backward and forward in time" (qtd. in Swiggart 115-16). Faulkner's narrative unfolds through Benjy's point of view and becomes a seemingly disorganized — almost shocking and controversial — narrative because Benjy's narration does not develop gradually, as it does not follow a chronological time, and his narrative reflects his responses to sensory stimuli.

The Sound and the Fury transpires within Faulkner's imagined time as the author delivers Benjy through simultaneity. Unable to comprehend facts from a logical or sequential perspective, Benjy is not consciously aware of what is happening around him. In using simultaneity, Faulkner references the theory of duration developed by French philosopher Henri Bergson:

> When we are seated on the bank of a river, the flowing of the water, the gliding of a boat or the flight of a bird, the ceaseless murmur in our life's deeps are for us three separate things or only one, as we choose. We can interiorize the whole, dealing with a single perception that carries along the three flows, mingled, in its course; or we can leave the first two outside and then divide our attention between the inner and the outer; or, better yet, we can do both at one and the same time, our attention uniting and yet differentiating the three flows, thanks to its singular privilege of being one and several. Such is our primary idea of simultaneity. (210)

Only imagined time grants the simultaneity between the river's flow, the gliding boat, and the bird's flight. The use of simultaneity stands intrinsic to the novel's abstract time narrative and the conception of Benjy's Time.

Moreover, only Benjy's Time grants the character control over his life experience. His thoughts come to him by physical and sensory means, but he is capable of perceiving simultaneity. In Benjy's mind, simultaneity exists in the absence of rational thinking, effectively representing his concept of time. According to Bergson, simultaneity occurs at the "intersection of time and space," while memory realizes itself at the "intersection of mind and matter" (64, 83). By applying Bergson's perception of duration and space to Faulkner's novel, Benjy's cyclical way of thinking becomes less problematic. For instance, Benjy continuously chants, Caddy, his sister's nickname:

> Caddy was walking. Then she was running, her booksatchel swinging and jouncing behind her.
> "Hello, Benjy." Caddy said. She opened the gate and came in and stooped down. Caddy smelled like leaves. "Did you come to meet me." she said. "Did you come to meet Caddy. What did you let him get his hands so cold for, Versh."

"I told him to keep them in his pockets." Versh said. "Holding on to that ahun gate."

"Did you come to meet Caddy," she said, rubbing my hands.

"What is it. What are you trying to tell Caddy." Caddy smelled like trees and like when she says we were asleep.

What are you moaning about, Luster said. You can watch them again when we get to the branch. Here. Here's you a jimson weed. He gave me the flower. We went through the fence, into the lot.

"What is it." Caddy said. "What are you trying to tell Caddy. Did they send him out, Versh."

"Couldn't keep him in." Versh said. "He kept on until they let him go and he come right straight down here, looking through the gate." "What is it." Caddy said. (Faulkner 6-7)

Indeed, the word "Caddy" appears a total of 368 times in the novel, and out of that number, 271 occur within Benjy's section, which comprises seventy-three pages of the novel. As Faulkner intentionally uses repetition to conceive Benjy's Time, the frequency of Caddy's name reveals Benjy's cyclical and simultaneous thinking.

The absence of sequential and logical thinking indicates that Benjy's Time coexists entirely within his memory and the subliminal space derived from his inability to use language. Benjy's difficulty in expressing himself becomes apparent when his companion, Luster, refers to Benjy's speaking as "moaning" (Faulkner 3). In fact, moaning and bellowing are so pervasive that the verb "hush" appears 190 times, directed at Benjy to either quiet or console him. As evidenced in the following passage: "'Hush, Benjy.' Caddy said. 'Mother wants you a minute. Like a good boy. Then you can come back. Benjy.' Caddy let me down, and I hushed . . . 'Candace.' Mother said. Caddy stooped and lifted me. We staggered. 'Candace.' Mother said. 'Hush.' Caddy said. 'You can still see it. Hush'" (Faulkner 63). Variations of Faulkner's deliberate repetition of this verb also include: "hush up," "hush now," "so I hushed," "hush your mouth," "can you hush now," "you better hush your mouth now," "can't you hush," and "Hush. Shhhhhh" (Faulkner 3-321). It is ironic that the only character in the novel expected to be non-verbal speaks the most and is incessantly told to be quiet. Faulkner frees Benjy by giving the "idiot" a language of his own, even though that language does not follow the rules of syntax and standard grammar. Therefore, Faulkner continues to create Benjy's Time by characterizing Benjy with limited discourse and contrasting perceptions of the world.

Moreover, Faulkner develops Benjy's Time by granting the character with his unique world and concept of time, anchoring both elements on sensory stimuli. Benjy establishes a link between objects and actions by assimilating,

expressing, and articulating his life through the following human senses: sight, sound, smell, and touch. Those sensations saturate Benjy's section, as literary critic Olga Vickery argues:

> The closed world which he builds for himself out of various sensations becomes at once the least and the most distorted account of experience. He merely presents snatches of dialogue, bits of scenes exactly as they took place. Such reproduction is not necessarily synonymous with the truth. Benjy, however, makes it his truth and his ethics, for it is in terms of sensation that he imposes a very definite order on his experience. (30-31)

He grasps for smells, shapes, and textures simultaneously, fully experiencing objects and places that hold significance within his restricted world. Thus, Benjy's sensory capacity provides the character with a vehicle to organize his otherwise chaotic universe, which is defined through Benjy's mental disability, and Benjy's Time embodies and embraces chaos in both his actions and oral language.

The concept of an imagined and cyclical time, or Benjy's Time, is crucial to understanding Faulkner's treatment of Benjy in *The Sound and the Fury*. Benjy does not follow linear and chronological time, which indicates that Faulkner denies the existence of time itself. However, rather than negate time altogether, he devises a *new kind of time*. French theorist Paul Ricoeur posits that "this difficult but intriguing novel—*The Sound and the Fury*—presents a circular narrative structure in which readers are moved back and forth in narrative time and temporality springs forth in the plural unity of future, past, and present" (32). Accordingly, Benjy's Time exemplifies "the concept of eternal return or cyclical time [which] appears frequently in twentieth-century literature" (Ricoeur 32). Faulkner introduces this circular idea by opening the novel with the following thoughts from Benjy:

> Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I could see them hitting. They were coming toward where the flag was and I went along the fence. Luster was hunting in the grass by the flower tree. They took the flag out, and they were hitting. Then they put the flag back and they went to the table, and he hit and the other hit. Then they went on, and I went along the fence. Luster came away from the flower tree and we went along the fence and they stopped and we stopped and I looked through the fence while Luster was hunting in the grass. (Faulkner 3, emphasis mine)

Note the word repetitions, the lack of proper punctuation, the absence of sequential thinking, and the presence of sensory stimuli. Within one short passage, Faulkner manages to explore four out of the five recognized human senses; only taste is not addressed. Yet, because the reader later learns that Benjy drools constantly and has not developed past the toddler stage, one can argue that he initially experiences his entire life through his mouth, tasting each moment before he acts.

Furthermore, the conjunction "and" appears ten times in the opening passage quoted above, emphasizing Benjy's cyclical thinking. The phrase "the fence" occurs five times, which represents a tactile barrier because the fence physically separates Benjy and Luster from the golfers playing on the other side. Variations of the phrases "the curling flower" and "the flower tree" point to sensorial responses of smell and sight. Also, "we went along the fence" indicates the two characters are moving endlessly. The sound of the -ing endings of the verbs—hitting, hunting, coming—resonates like a humming voice, while the conjugation in the present progressive tense indicates a continuation of actions. Then, abruptly, there is a shift to finite actions: "he hit and the other hit," and "they stopped and we stopped and I looked." These linguistic choices show that Benjy's Time follows a circular pattern that involves a mental process of elaboration and sensory stimuli that defies preconceived notions of chronological time as exact and linear. The revelations of the characters along with the voice of the omniscient narrator, plus the shuffling of the sections, are the three pieces of the enormous puzzle that forms *The Sound and the Fury*.

The novel escapes any expectations of the traditional novel genre because, at the time of its first publication in 1929, "stream-of-consciousness" narratives were still considered an innovation in literature. There is no plot in the traditional sense of the genre because the plot develops within Benjy's mind and represents an extensive accumulation of events in the Compson family. However, Faulkner does not disclose Benjy's mental disability right from the beginning of the novel. Thus, the temporal chaos in the story appears to be a lack of focus on the part of the author. As Benjy's disability reveals itself through his childlike thoughts and interactions with other characters, Faulkner's stylistic choices become clear. The author intentionally creates Benjy's Time, a cyclical concept of time, which is key to understanding the novel, even if physicists disagree with the possibility of an imagined time. Nonetheless, in the field of humanities and literature where characters travel in time without significant obstacles, one can defend that imagined time based on sensory stimuli remains a possibility. For confirmation, one only needs to read the very first chapter of *The Sound and the Fury*, inserting oneself into Benjy's Time.

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A Tale of Two Williams: The Wordsworthian Romantic Vision in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*

Shawn Lynn, University of West Georgia

William Faulkner's proficiency as an author does not only pervade into college courses, invading the minds of English majors, nor does his literature merely influence popular culture—just see metalcore band As I Lay Dying—but, Faulkner's craft also transcends time itself. Despite writing as a modernist, Faulkner's works contain various elements reminiscent of British Romanticism. His 1930 masterpiece *As I Lay Dying* calls back to William Wordsworth's works at the turn of the 1800s. When reading Faulkner's novel, one needs not look hard for similarities to Wordsworth's "We Are Seven" or the notion of what Wordsworth calls "spots of time": instances wherein a person experiences a mystical event, usually marked by trauma that freezes a moment and brings forth memory and interpretation. Furthermore, Faulkner deals with impoverished country folk in his novel, a topic that exists as the impetus for Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*. Faulkner's ability to convey Romantic tropes and address themes similar to Wordsworth in his novel *As I Lay Dying* reflects his own ability to write a modern Romantic novel, situating his craft outside the problematic confines of a regional Southern American writer.

It goes without question to define the implications of the term "Romantic," at least in a Wordsworthian connotation, when likening Faulkner to the poet and his era. The consensus is that the British Romantics wrote extensively on celebrations of Nature, privileged individuality, and rural imagery. Wordsworth himself sought to describe the blanket term, defining himself and his contemporaries in his preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. He explains that "'men' in 'low and rustic life'" are "less under the influence of social vanity" and "convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions,"

yet "such language, rising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent, and far more philosophical language" (Wordsworth 224). While others, or perhaps many, may argue against the notion of aligning Faulkner to Wordsworth based on the latter's definition of a Romantic writer as one who writes in "simple and unelaborated expressions," they must read in full Wordsworth's preface. Wordsworth elaborates that poets "think and feel in the spirit and passions of men," using "a peculiar language when expressing his feelings for his own gratification, or that of men like himself. But Poets do not write for Poets alone, but for men" (228). Faulkner's own "peculiar language," most notably his brilliant stream-of-consciousness narratives, emulates the spirits of his characters. His use of stream of consciousness provides readers a glimpse into his characters' minds, showing their flaws and illustrating their human struggles. Humans naturally reflect on their surroundings through unaware processes. Faulkner not only captures these thought processes perfectly, but he also provides readers with intensely human characters. He writes "men" for "men." Furthermore, his characters' philosophical reflections, noticeable in Darl Bundren, demonstrate the concept of philosophical languages existing in the Romantic's vision of depicting humanity. Not only that, but many of his novels, especially *As I Lay Dying*, represent rural, humble southern Americans reflecting on and immersing themselves in Nature. Across Faulkner's impressive collection, numerous characters interact with and find solace in Nature. Faulkner, then, furthers this Romantic vision set forth in the 1800s, as his dealings with rural settings, unique, Wordsworthian, and ultimately human voices gives rise to Romantic themes. By aligning Faulkner to a British Romantic, Faulkner's true gift as a writer enables him to exist outside of the dismissive realm of yet another author tacked with the label of "regional Southern writer."

To start, comparisons to Wordsworth, specifically his poem "We Are Seven," manifest through Faulkner's character Vardaman Bundren, showing Faulkner's Romantic concern with poor children and their perceptions of the pessimistic topic of death. In the same way that Wordsworth paints a picture of a young "cottage girl," Faulkner provides readers with a poor, white-trash youth. Vardaman, like many of his family members, struggles with the recent death of his mother, Addie Bundren. Faulkner addresses Vardaman's distress and coming to terms with death in a manner similar to Wordsworth's treatment of his cottage girl. At first, Vardaman's approach is innocent enough, albeit crazy. Prior to discovering his mother has died, Vardaman goes fishing. He catches the fish, leaves the carcass in the dirt, and establishes his own interpretations on death. Vardaman rationalizes,

> Then it wasn't and she was, and now it is and she wasn't. And
> tomorrow it will be cooked and et and she will be him and pa and

> Cash and Dewey Dell and there wont be anything in the box and so she can breathe. It was laying right yonder on the ground. I can get Vernon. He was there and he seen it, and with both of us it will be and then it will not be. (Faulkner 67)

In this scene of realization, Faulkner documents Vardaman's thought process of determining what constitutes an entity as dead: something that is not. Vardaman's rationale does not cease here; rather, he concludes in the novel's shortest chapter that "my mother is a fish" (Faulkner 84). Faulkner details this logical leap in the mind of his young character in an innocent and confused fashion. Vardaman cannot comprehend death, so he proceeds in his interpretation with what he knows. He is aware that the fish was once alive, now it is dead, therefore the fish ceases to be, while his mother was once alive and now dead, therefore making her analogous to the fish. The thought process is a twisted take on if-then argumentation, but is not wholly dissimilar to Wordsworth's logical debate between a similar youth and a pessimistic man. Later in the novel, while the Bundren family awkwardly crosses a river, Addie's coffin in tow, the wagon falls in, causing the coffin to go underwater. Vardaman remarks on the catastrophic scene, "'Where is ma, Darl? . . . You never got her. You knew she is a fish but you let her get away. You never got her. Darl. Darl. Darl'" (Faulkner 151). Here, Vardaman's logical pairing has reached fruition. His mother exists at one point, and she then dies, wherein he aligns her to a fish, and now, because fish need water, Addie swims away. Vardaman utilizes "like begets like" reasoning to explain how his mother being submerged in water would lead to her disappearance. After all, fish swim away in water.

Such innocence leading to misunderstanding, or perhaps enlightened understanding, manifests in Wordsworth's "We Are Seven." In "We Are Seven," Wordsworth presents a lyrical poem dealing with perceptions on death. A skeptical man argues with a "little cottage girl" (5) about how many members of her family exist. Wordsworth, much like Faulkner through Vardaman, utilizes simplistic rationale—here in the form of addition—to document the cognition of his young character. The cottage girl argues, "Seven boys and girls are we; / Two of us in the church-yard laid, / Beneath the church-yard tree" (30-32). "If two are in the church-yard laid, / Then ye are only five," the man replies (35-36). After more arguing, the girl's declaration, "Nay, we are seven!" concludes the poem (69). Like Faulkner, Wordsworth presents a simple child attempting to reconcile the relationship between life and death. James Shokoff asserts in "Wordsworth's Duty as a Poet in 'We Are Seven' and 'Surprised by Joy'" that this girl is unable to understand "the complexities of life that provoke the need or desire for faith"; however, "the important thing to her is the sense of their presence, the

feeling that they are still alive" (233). This idea is present in both Faulkner and Wordsworth's works. In both scenarios, their young characters know to some degree that their relatives are deceased, but through their own logic systems, they believe their relatives continue to exist. Their persisting existences take the form of material evolution in the case of Vardaman, or represent a crossing over in Wordsworth's. Shokoff states that the cottage girl must "create her own reality and to insist upon the continuing existence of her sister and brother" (234). Faulkner's Vardaman understands his mother's death in a Romantic manner akin to Wordsworth's cottage girl. In Vardaman's mind, his mother has died and, transformed into a fish, returns to nature through her escape in the river. While not sound, Vardaman's rationale coincides with the cottage girl's, as Addie continues to exist. The comparisons between Faulkner's and Wordsworth's Romantic themes concerning death and how their common-folk characters cope with said deaths solidify Faulkner's skill as a writer to transcend literary periods and countries with his pen. These Romantic themes suggest a vision that both he and Wordsworth share: a vision that privileges human experience and their connections to the mystical forces of Nature, an optimistic vision that gives hope for immortality through continued existence, and a vision that does not waver even in the face of revolutions or war. Both authors reflect humanity's desire for life to persist even after the cold, material world.

The decision of both writers to deal with impoverished common folk also places Faulkner's work alongside Wordsworth's in the Romantic vision. Faria Khan asserts in "Studies of Wordsworth" that

> Wordsworth depicted the beauties of nature and humble humanity in his poetry. He probed into the essence of man, available in the minds and hearts of people, especially of those living in the company of nature. Wordsworth is criticized for paying too much attention to the ordinary incidents and situations of life and for depicting beggars, farmers and workers as subject of his poems. (87)

Wordsworth's and Faulkner's emphasis on the common folk allows for the Romantic vision of humble individuals, free of urban materialism, experiencing Nature and, in turn, meditations on life in its entirety, to be born. Khan argues that "[i]n his poetry Wordsworth depicted the socio-political issues of his time. The reader finds himself in a dark world of poverty, crime, torture, despair, and broken dreams. He was deeply affected by the internal and external politics" (88). Faulkner, like Wordsworth, depicts the common man in order to critique society. His characters in *As I Lay Dying* are not wealthy in the slightest. The Bundrens live in harsh times, having to hoard money and rely on others' assistance to aid them on their trek to bury Mrs. Bundren.

In the novel, Faulkner paints a picture of a poor, white-trash family struggling against a cruel world. That is not to say that the family members, especially Darl, do not experience Romantic occurrences. The Bundrens are poor, incompetent, and battered by life. However, Faulkner utilizes the family for social commentary in a way similar to Wordsworth. Therefore, when Faulkner puts the Bundrens under discrimination, he seeks to point out a flaw inherent to the altered urban person cut off from Nature and morality. When the Bundrens finally reach Jefferson, they encounter the classist attitudes of the urbanized people. With the rotting corpse of the mother on the back of their wagon, the Bundrens call unwanted attention to themselves. While riding, three African Americans comment on the odor, causing Jewel Bundren to fly into a prideful rage. The scene illuminates the Bundrens' status. As poor white trash, the family is now socially beneath even the African Americans of their time. Faulkner utilizes this juxtaposition to highlight how detached the Bundrens are from the larger society. His depiction of a humble family signals the social outcasting evident in the southern United States. By also utilizing grotesque images and diction, Faulkner takes a stab at the social outliers that society creates. Families such as the Bundrens face oppression, much like the poor in Wordsworth's era.

In fact, the Bundrens' plight continues through Faulkner's comparison. While in Jefferson, Dewey Dell Bundren yearns to get an abortion. She timidly walks to a pharmacy where MacGowan, a clerk at a drugstore, deceives Dewey Dell into taking talcum powder capsules instead of abortion medications. Such a scene furthers Faulkner's Romantic disdain of urbanized individuals. MacGowan's actions illustrate the depravity of man mentioned frequently in Wordsworth's works. Faulkner demonstrates how a twisted, capitalist individual tricks a humble character in a way that only points to him lessening his faith in humanity. MacGowan takes advantage of Faulkner's own "cottage girl," causing her strife to linger.

The final instance of classism manifests itself in Vardaman. Throughout the novel, the luxury of owning a toy train motivates Vardaman's personal trek to Jefferson. A distraught Vardaman states, "'Why aint I a town boy, pa?' I said. God made me. I did not said to God to made me in the country. If He can make the train, why cant He make them all in the town because flour and sugar and coffee. 'Wouldn't you ruther have bananas?'" (Faulkner 66). Vardaman's lament further expounds upon Wordsworth's and Faulkner's concern with common folk in order to subvert the aristocracies of their times. In the same way Khan argues that Wordsworth details humble people dealing with "broken dreams," so too does Faulkner. His character expresses his own feelings concerning class disparities. Unfortunately for Vardaman, society is unfair to those less fortunate. Ultimately, the similarity between Wordsworth and Faulkner—how they undertake the notion of class distinc-

tion—presents a commonly held theme present in Romanticism. While the oppressed are unable to indulge in materialistic rewards, these humble individuals are able to more readily experience Nature and meditate on its power. The classist society may suppress Darl and Vardaman; however, they can still partake in Romantic reflections and existential thought processes otherwise absent in the corrupted city person.

Faulkner and Wordsworth's similarities do not end here; rather, Faulkner's talent for experimental writing calls for a comparison to Wordsworth's popular "spots of time" found within the Romantic's poems. These "spots of time," according to Peter Larkin, "occupy a fault-line between trauma and aspiration, between the struggles of existence and the pathos of any wishing to be" (30). In other words, the "spots of time" act as a mystical moment frozen in time wherein a subject is overcome by an experience, typically in nature, and finds the need to reflect on said instance. Usually, the subject experiencing the "spot of time" will appear to be within a moment, suspended as time is halted or slowed down to give rise to meditation.

Wordsworth's lyrical ballad "Lines Written in Early Spring" contains an example of these "spots of time." In the poem, the speaker sits in a grove "in that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts / Bring sad thoughts to the mind" (3-4). The speaker experiences Nature and all its associated pleasant sensations while lamenting "what man has made of man" (8). It seems odd that the speaker feels the need to reflect on a pessimistic theme such as the depravity of man; nonetheless, Wordsworth manages to highlight an instance where trauma and Nature transport someone into meditation. Furthermore, the reflection itself is contradictory, much like the time that exists as a stationary moment. While readers expect the speaker to go on about Nature, Wordsworth decides to have the speaker experience an existential crisis. Therefore, these "spots of time" hold relevance through their emphasis on human experience, a notion present in Faulkner's novel. In fact, three key "spots of time" occur in *As I Lay Dying*.

The first instance of Wordsworth's motif in *As I Lay Dying* happens as Darl lies awake at night as the rain falls. In a deeply meditative and highly Faulknerian scene, Darl comments most existentially,

> Beyond the unlamped wall I can hear the rain shaping the wagon that is ours, the load that is no longer theirs that felled and sawed it nor yet theirs that bought it and which is not ours either, lie on our wagon though it does, since only the wind and the rain shape it only to Jewel and me, that are not asleep. (Faulkner 80)

In this instance, Faulkner's ability as a writer encapsulates "spots of time" similar to Wordsworth. The synesthetic freezeframe highlights Darl's strug-

gle with existence while also illustrating a notion that Larkin discusses in his writing. Larkin asserts that Wordsworth

> had a liking for oxymoron, and phrases like "anxiety of hope" or "the stationary blasts of waterfalls" which occur in two of the "spots of time" episodes themselves repeat the structure of the nominalization which has captured them, setting off a mutual attraction between the vignettes commonly identified as "spots of time." (30)

The oxymoron at play here concerns existence and absence. The rain paints a picture of objects, ranging from once-thriving trees to Addie herself, that only exist in this snapshot of time for those conscious to their presence. Nature is the artist, providing Darl with a "spot in time" to reflect existentially on Nature and the trauma of losing his mother. Death, here as Darl's trauma, allows Darl an opportunity to dissociate and become self-aware, noting Nature and philosophical thought together.

The second "spot of time" happens as the Bundrens attempt to cross the river. As the family both comically and tragically tries to cross the river with the wagon and Addie's coffin, the family falls in, and havoc ensues. Addie's coffin falls in, mules die, and Cash's leg breaks again. Through the madness, however, a log erupts from under the water, causing Darl to reflect on the "spot of time." Darl expresses that

> The log appears suddenly between two hills, as if it had rocketed suddenly from the bottom of the river. Upon the end of it a long gout hangs like the beard of an old man or a goat. When Cash speaks to me I know that he has been watching it all the time, watching it and watching Jewel ten feet ahead of us. (Faulkner 148)

In Faulkner's second "spot of time," Darl stands, frozen in a moment, observing a powerful source of Nature. The log is personified, as it does indeed exist as a symbol of Nature's power. Darl takes time to reflect on how the log, and how its breathtaking presence, could have killed them in such a traumatic moment. Later in the novel, the log is likened to God warning the family of their sins for desecrating their mother's body in their vain human endeavors. Such a likening is similar to Wordsworth's notion of God existing in Nature. Wordsworth, much like other Romantics, was religious and felt that God, or at least spiritual forces, manifested within the natural sphere. And again, as in Wordsworth's works, Faulkner achieves an inherently Romantic motif, even though he writes in the 1930s. Faulkner's Romantic callback further demonstrates a return to respecting the boundar-

ies between mortals and God, despite writing in a period of disillusionment, situating Faulkner outside of his situation as a modern Southern writer.

Finally, the last key "spot of time" occurs when Darl sets fire to the barn with Addie's coffin inside. Darl takes a moment after starting the fire to notice Jewel's heroism, along with the increasing fire. Darl notes,

> For an instant longer he runs silver in the moonlight, then he springs out like a flat figure cut leanly from tin against an abrupt and soundless explosion as the whole loft of the barn takes fire at once, as though it had been stuffed with powder. The front, the conical façade with the square orifice of the door-way broken only by the square squat shape of the coffin on the sawhorses like a cubistic bug, comes into relief. (Faulkner 219)

Faulkner here emulates Wordsworth's "spots of time" in a way that further deals with Romantic meditation marked by trauma, struggling to exist, and an overwhelming feeling created by Nature. In this instance, Faulkner freezes, slows down, and accelerates time to allow Darl a reflection that harkens back to Wordsworth. Darl stands in awe of Jewel's movements and the beauty of the destruction. The fire, a destructive natural force, allows Darl to meditate on his own attempts to destroy the trauma of losing his mother and his own disdain at the family for carrying around her corpse. Faulkner illustrates Darl's awe at Jewel's beauty as he runs almost as a force of Nature saving the animals when the beauty of the fire destroys the material barn. Clearly, Wordsworth's Romantic vision is present in Faulkner's text. His character Darl reflects on three "spots of time" that illustrate Darl's own existential trauma and reverence for Nature. This Romantic trope present in the two authors' texts demonstrates how Faulkner's experimental writing techniques and characterizations transcend time, which points to Faulkner's transcendence of literary periods yet again.

Even though William Faulkner published *As I Lay Dying* in 1930, aspects reminiscent of William Wordsworth, such as having innocent children deal with death, incorporating "spots of time," and emphasizing common folk characters to drive home anti-urban sentiments, showcase Faulkner's outstanding writing and its ability to surpass the constraints of time. Vardaman Bundren's concept of existing after death highlights humanity's need to construct immortal visions. Furthermore, Faulkner's ability to write in a way that captures a technique associated with Wordsworth demonstrates the Romanticism of Faulkner, his characters, and his novel. And, through his character source, Faulkner becomes similar to Romantic author William Wordsworth. Overall, such a comparison establishes Faulkner beyond the celebrated author he already is. Faulkner is not merely a great Southern

American writer; his texts contain elements present in other periods in other countries. Through this understanding, readers can begin to go beyond assumptions of certain "regional" authors, thus increasing readership and scrutiny.

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Grace Paley's Use of Humor: Revealing the Oppressed Female Condition

Marisa Sorensen, University of West Georgia

Over the course of literary history, authors have been instructed time and time again to write what they know. American short story writer Grace Paley did just this: her short stories, namely "Goodbye and Good Luck" and "An Interest in Life," are narrated from the perspective of female characters, and the stories center around a domestic landscape that women from her era would be able to identify with. By drawing from the domestic world around her, Paley creates a sense of community amongst female readers because of the "cultural insider-knowledge" they share (Critchley 67). In turn, this feminine solidarity places men on the outside because they lack the ability to relate to Paley's setting. Despite this division of the genders, Paley's characters reveal the ways in which women rely heavily on the presence of men in order to feel loved and/or secure. Thus, her writing recognizes the problematic and often conflicting nature of the female gender role. She subtly redefines womanhood and criticizes the patriarchal order by using humor to emphasize the flaws within this establishment. Additionally, Paley's manipulation of humor reflects Freud's relief theory, in which women use comedy as a means of relieving the social oppression they experience at the hands of men. Therefore, Paley's work stands as an example of "true humour" by changing the situation (Critchley 11): her writings question the validity of certain social practices—namely, sexism and misogyny—and also shows us that the established patriarchal order stands in need of change.

Paley's fictional characters dismantle previous literary representations of women, whereas members of the female gender are typically reduced to the virgin stereotype or that of the seductress. Her manipulation of bodily

humor, or rather, humor that targets the body, affords a more realistic quality to her female characters by depicting the female body as grotesque. What is most notable about the grotesque is that it "allows for transgressive . . . behaviors," thus enabling Paley, as a writer, to deviate from traditional depictions of femininity by writing her women as sexual and bawdy (Gonçalves and Funck 83). Consider Rosie, the narrator from "Goodbye and Good Luck." According to Simon Critchley, "[T]he human being can subjectively distance itself from its body, and assume some sort of critical position with respect to itself" (42). We see Rosie distance herself from her body by assuming the grotesque way in which others may view her. This is achieved through her use of "fat jokes" that she makes at her own expense; she refers to herself as the "fat old aunt" and "[a] lady what they call fat and fifty" (Paley 14, 19). Freud's relief theory holds that by mocking her image, Rosie alleviates the psychic activity she would have originally used to repress feelings of estrangement and/or rejection, which would stem from the knowledge that her "excess" body weight does not conform to the norm or ideal image for women (Gonçalves and Funck). Within the rhetorical situation between characters in the story, Rosie's body image would alienate her from other women; however, because Paley writes this character as a woman who boldly makes fun of herself, the author establishes a sense of unity amongst female readers from her time. This is achieved by portraying a realistic female character who exists as a realistic body. In contrast, Rosie also conveys a sense of confidence within her own body image because she feels secure enough to make fun of herself; this is what makes her style of comedy slightly unsettling for readers who are accustomed to the idea of the submissive woman. Her self-effacing humor strips away the power one would experience for making fun of her weight and transmits that authority to Rosie, the individual who would have originally been the object of the joke, thus rendering the patriarchal order—a system that would otherwise have her believe that her body is undesirable—as powerless.

Paley also uses Rosie to subvert the patriarchy by portraying her as a woman aware of her sexuality. Unlike previous literary depictions of women, which stereotyped them as either pure virgins or evil seductresses, Rosie challenges this clear dichotomy by demonstrating characteristics belonging to both. Indeed, one could argue that she embodies the manipulative quality of the seductress stereotype, as she engages in a romantic relationship with Volodya Vlashkin, a married man. Rosie again displays this manipulative quality because she exercises a certain degree of authority over Vlashkin by convincing him to marry her at the end of the narrative. Before this occurs, however, Rosie discovers that he is married, and upon doing so, ends their relationship and denies the hands of many other suitors; this would indicate a morality, chastity, and innocence about her, all of which are key

elements of the virgin stereotype (Savill). One of Rosie's admirers, Ruben, says, "I offer you a big new free happy unusual life . . . With me, we will raise up the sands of Palestine to make a nation. That is the land of tomorrow for us Jews" (Paley 16). To this, Rosie responds, "Ha-ha, Ruben, I'll go tomorrow then" (Paley 16). Here, Paley's use of both ethnic and dry humor works to underscore the ridiculousness of the social practices of courtship and marriage in much the same way that Critchley argues: "Humour views the world awry, bringing us back to the everyday by estranging us from it" (65). Moreover, Ruben's exaggerated enthusiasm for childrearing reminds readers of the absurd way in which religion further compels women towards domesticity. According to Freud's relief theory, because readers laugh at Paley's acknowledgement and mockery of this strange religious tendency, a portion of subconscious energy—originally spent on repressing feelings of opposition with regards to this forced domesticity—is released. Thus, female readers experience psychological relief. Furthermore, Ruben demonstrates the extent of women's oppression: his "offer" to Rosie suggests that women require the presence of men in order to achieve happiness and success. Because she denies her suitor's zealous proposal, Rosie again subverts the patriarchal order by refusing to succumb to marriage and motherhood, domestic roles ascribed to women.

However, Rosie's relationship with Vlaskin further complicates her subversion of the patriarchal establishment; although she does challenge the gendered order in several instances throughout the narrative, it is clear that her female identity is ultimately stifled by the presence of men. Consider the following: Rosie is enthralled by Vlashkin's talent and status as an actor. After seeing his performance in a play, Rosie says, "I cried to think who I was—nothing—and such a man could look at me with interest" (Paley 12). Similarly, of Vlashkin's book, she states, "No, no, I am not mentioned. After all, who am I?" (Paley 16). From these two statements, it is clear that Rosie regards herself as lesser than her male significant other, which imitates the cultural and social expectation for women to act as the subservient gender. Moreover, her question of "Who am I?" invokes a much larger debate on the female identity. It is interesting to note that Rosie primarily seeks to define herself in relation to Vlashkin. The only other time she assumes a "critical position with respect to [her]self" is when she jokingly refers to her weight (Critchley 42). From this, readers gather that not only is the narrator conscious of the way in which her physical body is perceived, but she is also aware of the social positioning of said body with respect to the male gender. In both situations, Rosie is inferior: her weight is viewed as unattractive while her gender is viewed as lesser. Although she undermines the patriarchal order to a degree (first by using self-effacing humor to challenge the ideal female body image, then by dismantling stereotypical representa-

tions of women), Rosie's voice and identity are ultimately suppressed by the presence of a man. Thus, not only does Paley represent the complexity of a gendered hierarchy, she also exposes and critiques the way in which that very order disparages the female gender.

Although Paley's short story "An Interest in Life" does not utilize self-effacing humor in the same way, traces of a darker and more misanthropic humor can be found within the text. Paley's use of comedy in this narrative accomplishes a subversion of patriarchy similar to that of Rosie's in "Goodbye and Good Luck;" said undermining is achieved by the way in which her characters, both male and female, conform to and break from traditional gender roles. Virginia, the protagonist of "An Interest in Life," is—like Rosie—a complex female character in that she challenges previous literary depictions of femininity. One could even assert that she functions as a more progressive feminist figure, because she, unlike Rosie, further complicates the virgin/slut dichotomy. Although Virginia's name invokes images of the virgin stereotype, she deviates from this standard representation of womanhood more so than Rosie because Virginia expresses her sexuality in a more obvious manner: she has an affair with John Raftery after her husband's desertion and, in addition, at the narrative's conclusion, she fantasizes that his return will end in lovemaking on their kitchen floor. Virginia's complication of the virgin/slut dichotomy also manifests itself in the way she simultaneously demonstrates qualities stereotypical of the mother/wife, old maid, and seductress. According to D. Jill Savitt, the standard mother/wife representation is "totally dependent" and "selfless." Paley demonstrates Virginia's dependence on external sources by the way in which this character relies on first her husband, the welfare system, then John Raftery for support, whether it be of an emotional or financial nature. Additionally, Virginia reflects the "selfless" aspect of the mother/wife stereotype in the way she treats her children (Savill). She says, "And Barbie is such a light sleeper. All she has to do . . . is wake up and wander in and see her mother and her new friend John with his pants around his knees, wrestling on the kitchen table. A vision like that could affect a kid for life" (Paley 90). Here, by humorously denying the temptation to have sex with John for the sake of her child, Virginia displays her selflessness as a mother. Because she is a married woman, her desire for John would be considered socially inappropriate; hence, this apparent sexuality is indicative of her role as the seductress. Freud's relief theory suggests that Paley's use of comedy in this instance enables her female readers to experience a degree of "comic relief" by expending some of the psychic energy used to repress sexually deviant feelings (Critchley 9). Thus, through this dispensation of energy, Paley reminds her audience of the extent of women's oppression in which a subtle joke is needed to alleviate or cope with the aforementioned oppression.

To further highlight the flaws within the patriarchal order, Paley uses Virginia as a reflection of the "confined" nature of the mother/wife stereotype (Savill), which also speaks to the "confined" nature of the female condition. Consider the way in which Virginia blames herself for being in a poor situation once her husband deserts her. She says, "I don't have to thank anything but my own foolishness for four children when I'm twenty-six years old, deserted, and poverty-struck . . . A man can't help it, but I could have behaved better" (Paley 88). Although this statement is not intended to come off as comedic, its absurdity certainly functions in much the same way that jokes do, according to Simon Critchley; he argues that, "[Jokes] mock, parody or deride the ritual practices of a given society" (Critchley 5). Not only does Virginia justify her husband's desire for sex as a quality inherent to manhood, but she also reinforces the age-old notion that men are not responsible for the outcome of consensual sex (i.e., pregnancy). This ridiculous and misogynistic mode of thinking thus confines the female gender by placing the blame on women and shaming them for becoming pregnant. As a result of this responsibility, Virginia is required to fulfill the role of a dutiful parent, while her husband has the ability to leave the domestic setting at will. Although Virginia is empowered to a degree by her new position as the head of the household, she is limited by the way in which society—from Paley's time as well as in our contemporary era—denigrates single mothers. Moreover, as previously discussed, Virginia looks to John Raftery as a source of comfort and support in the absence of her husband; she claims that he "came from Jersey to rescue her" (Paley 87). This statement conveys images of the stereotypical damsel-in-distress, thereby suggesting a submissive quality to Virginia that requires the presence of men in order to achieve happiness and security. Thus, by negating what little subversion over the patriarchal order Virginia is able to achieve, Paley "derides the ritual practices of a given society" (Critchley 5) —namely, the patriarchy—by exposing how women are powerless to escape the inevitability of fulfilling a prescribed female gender role.

It is interesting to note that Paley also uses her male characters to subvert the patriarchal order by writing them as representations of misogyny; her portrayal of this problematic mode of thinking thus distinctly recognizes that the patriarchal establishment stands in need of change. Consider the way in which Virginia's husband, like Virginia and Rosie, conforms to and deviates from gender roles and expectations. He seemingly fulfills the stereotypical role of a domesticized man, for he functions as a father, a spouse, and the provider for the family. However, this characterization is problematized. Interestingly enough, though he remains unnamed throughout the story and is only referred to by Virginia as "my husband," he does not uphold these traditional roles, for he ultimately abandons them when he

leaves Virginia and their children. Moreover, he is depicted as a sexist and misogynist, which is evidenced by his relationship with his wife. Before leaving her, he gives her a broom. This humorous yet mocking gift is, as Virginia recognizes, "a mean present to give a woman you planned on never seeing again" (Paley 81); it serves as a physical reminder of Virginia's "confined" nature in a domestic landscape because—as previously mentioned—Virginia's husband has the ability to leave this setting while Virginia does not (Savill). In addition to this offensive gift, Virginia's husband also verbally insults his wife. He claims, "The city won't let you starve . . . After all, you're half the population. You're keeping up the good work. Without you the race would die out. Who'd pay the taxes? Who'd keep the streets clean? There wouldn't be no Army. A man like me wouldn't have no place to go" (Paley 85). Clearly, the author does not intend for this statement to be taken as a compliment, because Virginia's husband reduces the value of femininity by suggesting that the most meaningful aspect of womanhood is the ability to reproduce. Furthermore, by stating that the city—a government entity—would not "let [Virginia] starve," her husband acknowledges that this misogynistic perspective permeates larger aspects of society. Here, Paley simulates what Freud argues is the "essence" of irony by

> saying the opposite of what one intends to convey to the other person, but in sparing him contradiction by making him understand . . . that one means the opposite of what one says. Irony can only be employed when the other person is prepared to hear the opposite, so that he cannot fail to feel an inclination to contradict. (215-16)

What Freud suggests is that, because Virginia's husband says the opposite of what he really means—that women are fulfilling the "good work" (Paley 85)—he psychologically compels Virginia to degrade her own gender by contradicting him, because she expects him to degrade womanhood in a more obvious manner.

It is clear that Paley's flawed, complex characters accurately reflect the complexity of the dynamic struggle for power between the genders. More important, however, is the way in which these characters, whether they be male or female, transgress and conform to previous literary depictions of gender roles and gender expectations. As modern readers, we gain a better understanding of the absurdity of these roles and expectations through Paley's characters: both Rosie and Virginia underscore the ridiculousness of the virgin/slut dichotomy through the expression of their sexuality, while the blatant misogyny of Virginia's husband reminds us that the patriarchal order stands in need of change. Additionally, Paley's manipulation of humor affords her female readers a degree of psychic relief, whereas the subcon-

scious energy originally intended for repressing feelings of anger and frustration towards the patriarchal order is released in the form of laughter. This psychological process also reminds her audience of the extent of women's oppression. Thus, Paley's writing "tells us something about who we are and the sort of place we live in" (Critchley 11), revealing that, despite the many progressions that have been made in the feminist movement, there is still much improvement to be made.

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Black and White in Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*

Noah Isherwood, University of West Georgia

Persepolis, by Marjane Satrapi, is a graphic novel of the highest caliber. It gives words and pictures to the memories of its author regarding the Islamic Revolution in Iran and its aftermath. While often hard to trace in specific ways, *Persepolis* has had a profound influence on the graphic narrative genre, especially in those works originating in the Middle East (Reyns-Chikuma and Lazreg 769, 760). One would expect such a work, on such a serious topic, to be serious in form, and *Persepolis* is indeed serious, but not in classic graphic novel style. Other mature works in this genre, such as *The Walking Dead* and *The Dark Knight*, are gritty; they are full of vibrant colors and action sequences that illustrate the chaos of their respective worlds. *Persepolis*, however, is unique. While its topic could hardly be more chaotic, the work is visually simple and screams "peaceful" upon a casual glance. Its figures and objects are drawn in minimalistic scenes, and the text is childlike. (Its subtitle is, tellingly, *The Story of a Childhood.*) However, the greatest stylistic difference is found in the color palette. Only two hues are utilized: black and white. What is one to make of this fact? Here, an era, movement, and time of great suffering is reduced to one hundred fifty-three pages of stark, modest, black and white images. Could it simply be that Pantheon Books ran out of colored ink? That a colored version of *Persepolis* was somehow fiscally impossible? These ideas are, of course, facetious. While finances do often contribute to an artist's color choices (Baetens 111), here Satrapi is making a powerful artistic choice by portraying these simple events in simple monochrome. The choice to use only black and white in *Persepolis* has a unique and net positive effect on the novel as a whole by setting a mood of starkly polar, emotional extremes and simplifying an otherwise overwhelming story.

The use of black and white influences the overall mood in a dynamic way, varying from the stylistic norms of comic art and illustrating the sheer bleakness of the Islamic Revolution in a way only monochrome can do. When Marji's father Ebi is shown taking photos of the demonstrations (Satrapi 29), some of his pictures are revealed as well, memories within a memory. In these photos are bleak images of the civil conflict: soldiers in black uniforms with similarly dark faces; a terrified civilian shown in white against an unrecognizable black background. In another scene, black and white illustrates pure carnage quite ably (Satrapi 102). A handful of figures are haphazardly thrown about into space by explosions on a minefield. Sharp, piercing white bars of energy propel the bodies upward and contrasting black arrows seem to represent debris and gore flying through the air. The last scene is unique in respect to texture. Satrapi uses smudging and shading to show the dusty and defiled wreckage of a bombed building in one of only a few scenes where any form of texture is actually implied (Satrapi 142). These scenes show readers the bleakness of the setting and conflict presented. Some synonyms of "bleak" are "bare," "stark," "inhospitable," and "dreary." The sense one gets when viewing the above images certainly embodies these ideas of bleakness. In Ebi's photographs, one sees the lack of charm and hospitality in the stark shading of the soldier's faces and the fear in the white and exposed face of the civilian. The mood of the scene is tense, and one can feel the social tensions in the desolate colors. The scene illustrating the minefield explosions evokes raw energy: visceral ripping and rending of earth and man alike. Rather than using color to show this, brown for dirt, red for blood and the like, Satrapi uses monochrome to evoke the emotional basis for the carnage, not necessarily the carnage itself. This makes one experience the memory of the carnage powerfully, recalling another horrific description of a battlefield by Henry Dunant. The future founder of the International Red Cross described the mutilation at Solferino this way: soldiers "trampling each other under foot, killing one another on piles of bleeding corpses . . . crushing skulls, ripping bellies open." (19). Add to the battlefield high explosives and one sees in *Persepolis* a ghastly picture of modern massacre. Lastly, when used to shade the rubble, a profound sense of texture is brought out in the black and white. Compared to the majority of the book's other scenes, flat and two dimensional by choice, this texture is very realistic. This heightened sense of realism helps one visualize the wreckage: the broken bricks, twisted rebar, and chunks of unidentifiable debris, all covered in fine concrete dust and charred material. Jan Baetens says that "graphic novels, the more 'distinguished' form of comic art, tend to be in black and white" (112). Thus, under this context, *Persepolis* does not stylistically differ from many other graphic novels, but when one considers comic art as a whole, *Persepolis* certainly does. Comic

strips, the form of visual narrative most popular with the public at large, are mostly in color. A characteristic of most colored comic art is its purpose; most comic strips, while often delivering a lesson or some form of lighter social criticism, are supposed to make their readers laugh. Not so with most monochromatic graphic novels. Stylistic similarities are evident in works such as Spiegelman's *Maus* (1991) and Bechdel's *Fun Home* (2006) and are reflected in the format of *Persepolis*: a very heavy story is presented in conspicuous monochrome and simple illustrations. Seemingly though, this only applies to non-fictional tales. This black and white motif is now often spontaneously associated with the graphic novel genre (Baetens 112). Satrapi contributes to this stereotype with her purposeful use of monochrome to illustrate the lethal tale of the Islamic Revolution, a struggle in which ten thousand Iranian citizens died in the first several years (Jalaeipour 210).

Within this broad concept of mood, there is even a more specific use of black and white. Satrapi uses the change from white to black, and vice versa, to signal a mood change, forcing the readers to instantly transition in their own "reading mood," which helps control how the readers interprets each section. The first iteration of this change, black to white, is evident as Marji, her mother, and her grandmother are tensely waiting for Marji's father to return from a dangerous photography session; the background is black, and their faces and postures reflect the worried atmosphere of the room (Satrapi 30). However, as soon as Ebi, Marji's father, speaks from the doorway, the faces of the women change to relief and the background is split between white and black. When he actually enters the scene, the background is fully white, and the family verbally expresses their collective relief over Ebi's safety. The other type of change, white to black, occurs when Marji's cousin Shahab arrives from the front for a brief visit (Satrapi 101). As he enters, it is all smiles on a white background, but that changes in two frames. In one, Marji's mother asks Shahab to either confirm or deny the rumor that young boys are being thrown into battle untested and untried. The next frame shows a pained Shahab gazing upwards–his face showing the brutal memories he is recalling. The background changes to black and will remain so for the duration of the cousin's ruinous tale. The technique of using color and shading changes to affect mood is old hand to most illustrators. In the comic strip *Calvin and Hobbes*, Bill Watterson uses this technique to beautifully illustrate the difference between reality and Calvin's imagination. In a daydream about a private investigator, the scenes are hazy, and dark colors are used, as a contrast to Calvin's bright and clear "real" world (Watterson 193-94). This type of change can be sudden or subtle depending on the situation and technique, but, in utilizing only two colors, Satrapi's mood changes are always unanticipated and drastic. This affects readers more than they may think. Think of it this way: as the

illustrator draws, so feels the reader. A common motivation in a graphic novel is to appeal to one's emotions in a visual fashion that mere prose cannot. A literal one-hundred-eighty-degree pivot in color triggers a figurative pivot of the same nature in one's emotional understanding of the mood. And, as in real life, the quicker the pivot, the more one is affected. When the mood instantly changes from joy to horror, as Shahab tells his war story, one feels more deeply the emotional change of the characters. While Shahab's change in facial expression alone tells one a good deal about his inner emotional swing, the background change cements it. The same occurs in the first example: one actually rejoices with the women, as Ebi returns, and the relief is read on their faces, but the mood is brightened permanently by the brightening of the background. Thus, these individual mood changes, powerful in and of themselves, powerfully contribute to the overall mood in *Persepolis*: one of dynamic and dramatically opposite emotions.

The monochromatic color scheme does not only influence the setting and mood, but also affects the actual content of *Persepolis*. The use of black and white to illustrate two opposing philosophical perspectives, a seemingly narrow-minded allusion in our modern culture, actually encourages the reader to acknowledge the fact that the perspectives illustrated are binaries. Early in the book, a scene depicts two opposing sides in a public demonstration (Satrapi 5). Those for the hijab are depicted wearing that same black veil, while those against the institution of the veil are depicted as wearing white. In another series of frames, Mahatma Gandhi and Kemal Ataturk are depicted in white clothes, while Reza Shah Pahlavi, or rather, just young officer Reza, is shown wearing black (Satrapi 20). In yet another scene, young boys just arriving on the front are drawn in white, but after they have gone through a course of indoctrination, they wear black (Satrapi 101). It is in this black garb that they are obliterated on the minefield. Before exploring the meanings of these juxtaposed colors, a disclaimer: as there are only two colors used in this work, these philosophical differences shown by color are by no means constant; however, when taken individually, the stylistic effect is striking. In the demonstration scene, one sees freedom clash with religious oppression in the form of the government institution of mandatory hijab wearing. By depicting those supporting this oppression in black, Satrapi uses a common color association, that of equating black to evil and corruption. She contrasts this with the white, using that color to represent freedom from oppression and the right. Satrapi also equates whiteness with righteousness in scenes that depict government forces persecuting citizens (Satrapi 14, 18, 24), but here it carries the extra connotation of innocence. The police, in the wrong and drawn in black, beat the innocent civilians who wear white. This is a commonly held and often unconscious association; one can immediately think of many examples of black and white acting along

these lines. One thinks of the Gestapo's dark uniforms, the Grim Reaper's black cloak signifying death, and Cerberus, the black, three-headed hound of the Underworld in Greek mythology. Hades, the Greek underworld, is probably the best mythological example of this motif of black equaling evil; "Erebus," another name for Hades, is translated "darkness" (Lagasse). Conversely, one imagines white bridal gowns representing purity, white doves suggesting peace, and Gandalf the White, a force of pure goodness. An excellent symbol of this trope is the white stag, a creature mentioned in many stories and displayed on many coats of arms. Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts, describes its attributes in his farewell address, "[The white stag] led them in the joy of the chase to new and fresh adventures, and so to capture happiness" (Orans). The above examples represent the ethereal ideals of good and bad; however, in this next example, they represent specific manifestations of those ideals, namely in social systems. In several frames, Gandhi and Ataturk are depicted as wearing white and Reza Shah is depicted as wearing black. While Satrapi says that all three were representing the "Republican ideal," she also mentions that they were putting it into practice each "in his own way" (Satrapi 20). Historically, both Ataturk and Gandhi succeeded in crafting stable, albeit different, republican states. However, Reza Pahlavi had no such success and neither did his son. As shown in *Persepolis,* Reza's dynasty was founded upon greed, while Gandhi and Ataturk truly wanted a better future for their respective countries. As Shareen Brysac states, "Reza wanted it both ways: to preserve the feudal prerogatives of royalty while seeking the global prestige of being Persia's enlightened modernizer" (Brysac 101). Those "feudal prerogatives" made the Shah's rule much more heavy-handed than both Ataturk's and Gandhi's. The choice to depict these men in contrasting colors relative to the success of each is a powerful one, highlighting the differences in their styles and relation to goodness. The final example is the series of frames in which the young boys undergo a change from mostly white to black. They change from white, denoting innocence, to black, symbolizing desensitization. Satrapi says that the boys are put "in a trance," and the government officials "hypnotize them"; then, they go to battle, untrained and untested (101). While the earlier change from white to black represented a mood change, here it represents a change in philosophy. The boys go from innocent children to falsely idealized children. There is no natural maturation evident. This process reflects the dictionary definition of "indoctrination": "to imbue with a usually partisan or sectarian opinion, point of view, or principle" (Merriam-Webster). The only effect of this philosophical change that the color change represents is the rendering of the boys, powerless to fight the irresistible fate that awaits them: martyrdom for an oppressive regime. This is a change so very recognizable to many individuals. It is

Anakin becoming Darth Vader, Lucifer adopting the moniker of Satan, and Edmund falling for the White Witch. People see it every day in their own lives as well, but seeing it here in monochrome changes the common into the poignant, and individuals despair for the lives lost in this change towards the darkness.

Color is important. Without color, people's lives would presumably be quite dull. Individuals tend to think of visual art as necessarily colorful and assume that the color is a main cause of art's vibrancy. However, *Persepolis* challenges the assumption that color is necessary to give meaning to a graphic narrative. While the entire work is monochromatic, it loses none of the emotion or depth that color would have lent it. In fact, the emotional quality of *Persepolis* is more unique because its lack of color makes the emotions more moving. Readers ride the roller coaster of Marji's life with her, experiencing all the emotional twists and turns of her experience as they happen. Besides being a powerful tool for mood, philosophy, and emotion, the black and white palette simplifies the complex narrative of the Islamic Revolution into a manageable format, especially for those who are unfamiliar with this series of events. The monochrome exhibited in this graphic novel is an important stylistic choice, and one's perception of the work would be quite different if it were in color.

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Making Herstory: Producing a queer female history in *Ōoku: The Inner Chambers*

Liz Tetu, Metropolitan State University

Fumi Yoshinaga's graphic novel series *Ōoku: The Inner Chambers*, through a female-focused counterhistory constantly juxtaposed and justified against the recorded, patriarchal history of Japan from the third to the tenth shogun, works towards modern empowerment and commentary. The reconstruction of gender in this alternative history, examined in the text itself as well as through existing scholarship and gender and colonial theories, entertains discussions of sociosexual construction (through the naturalized queering in Yoshinaga's narrative), gender hegemony, and an introduction to masculinity without male bodies. The restructuring of gender in an established historical setting, along with the way in which queer sexuality is a natural factor in the transition of this society, provides readers with a working image of how the statuses of genders look as they develop towards nonconformity. Through her ending, as well, returning to the patriarchal lineage recognized today, Yoshinaga invigorates through an ironic final act a timeless desire to claim (or to reclaim in keeping with the narrative) this transitory stage and counterhistory, to see in living memory the fulfillment of an evolving female, queer sexual society and its revolutionary potentiality.

For a complete comprehension of the fictional social transition of Japan in *Ōoku*, one first needs to understand sexuality as a social phenomenon. Ruth Hubbard claims that any essential sexuality people may possess endures manipulation in its expression through societal policing, rendering it a social construction (131). As a social construction, sexuality is susceptible to compartmentalization and, from a sequestered category, organization into structures of power. The convenience of these categories in such structures relies on a generalized sexual script that unifies the sexual realities of those

participating based on the stratification of sex and gender and sexual identification (Hubbard 133). Universalized sexual expectations of people based on sex, gender, and sexual identity influenced by heterosexist ideologies result in some of the most violent policing methods. Unlike gender and sex, where "evidence" lies within the body, the "evidence" of sexuality exists in the immaterial ideologies of those who control the most material within a society. Because of the heterosexual tendency towards siring progeny, literally reproducing the material of heterosexuality, the family and its values dominate the realm of social normalcy. As a social construction, the codes of sexuality are heterosexual norms.

The early plot of *Ōoku*, though, consciously sacrifices heterosexuality and its norms for a façade that implicates functioning queerness. Two male monks, discussing the fate of their master being coerced into serving "the inner chambers" (the sectioned-off, usually female-filled harem of the shogun), reveal that they believe the shogun sleeps with other males, is filling these female-only places with these males, and is alive in a time where a disease is killing almost every male around his age (Yoshinaga 2:36-37). The speculative queerness of the third shogun (his female identity not yet presented in this part of the story) renders his queer sexuality a function of his station, unquestioned because of his gender presentation but even more because of the power he has inherited from his advanced social status as a male shogun. The structure of normative sexuality, through his possession of male power, results in some restructuring. The ability to pass as one of the diminishing number belonging to a male order while in a homosexual-blooming society does the work of queering heterosexuality, specifically female sexuality and its reproductive capabilities. Queered, reproduction is no longer a requirement or threat to female sexual expression.

The sudden liberation of female sexuality does not rewrite the rules of social categorization, however, as influential institutions still code power according to those traditional gender norms. As described, the female shogun remains hidden for the sanctity of social order; furthermore, as other female officials arrive in office, they continue to adopt masculine names, this choice depicting "the negative process of historical forgetting" that erases the details of those who filled these roles and ultimately leads to the erasure of this counterhistory from social consciousness (Horbinski 67). The delineation of heterosexual duty incorporates itself easily into existing structures of gendered power, as issues of reproduction and legal ritual, and legacies of patriarchy, remain to be challenged. Connell and Messerschmidt, in their essay on hegemonic masculinity, provide an example of tensions within the male-dominated heteronormative family structure to show how deep-seated organizations of power based on gender cause emotional conflict in not only its construction but also its destruction in aspects such as domestic labor

(233). In a heterosexual family, especially with children, the sexual rules change (less sexual activity as a way to prevent having more children, for example) even if the gender of labor remains the same. Sexuality, then, in the dynamics of labor and gendered stratification, only affects change when the sexing or gendering of that sexuality is queer. Efficacious queering requires activating turbulence in the cores of power, not just the individual.

After the pox upsets Yoshinaga's speculative society, setting up the total narrative, female reproductive freedoms do not result in labor equality, yet the new naturalized role of males as beings for procreation allows liberties within the non-reversed structure. As the disease strikes more and more males, the female populations of Japan inherit more domestic and economic duties, while the duties of males are utterly sexualized, males ceasing "to do anything besides sire children" (Yoshinaga 4:49). The essentialism that slathers manhood in reproductive capabilities recodes the masculinity that still maintains dominance over females, especially those underprivileged. Manhood and the male have become treasured, every male a scarce resource, sacred. The spaces traditionally filled by males (labor, business, and other poverty to middle class pursuits as well as higher class occupations like martial arts and politics), though, are now vacant, requiring bodies to revitalize those spaces in order to maintain society. As females are the only persons available to fill these spaces, they now have direct power over economic and political spheres. The male, sequestered to the home, officially trades the physical location of power with that of the female. This new, yet repurposed, purpose (procreation) in males avows the acceptability of variation in female sexuality. Sexual inconsistency in females is easier to structure in the sexual unilaterality of male, heteropatriarchal structures, making room for female sexual individuality, multiplicity in identities unable to endure categorization, a form of resistance capable of unraveling a system based on male uniqueness and queering previous sexual expectations based on sex and gender.

The expectation of males to reproduce elevates the station of matrilineal production, accounting for shifts in the sexing of production and reproduction closely related to class. Females who cannot produce intellectually in this Japan compete against production with reproduction, using decrepit male prostitutes to impregnate themselves (Yoshinaga 3:146-47). These females, who align closest with normative female sexuality in a heteropatriarchal understanding, are distasteful, seen as desperate and dirty in their association with indiscriminate male materiality. The irony, of course, exists in the ways they are parallel with the new female ruling class, which does not fully participate in this freer sexual culture, still expected to politicize their fertility in traditional ways, but in this narrative in order to produce female heirs (Kim 197-98). The middle class, however, expresses the most an emerging sexual revolution. In a place where history meets counterhis-

tory through invention, in new farming implements like portable watering and milling machines and the trifurcated hoe that decrease the time it takes to farm crops, the justification for these technological progresses in the narrative is the new need females have for more non-laboring time (and mostly to "baby" remaining males) (Yoshinaga 4: 21). Attributing these revolutionary advancements to the new social placement of females exposes these creations as intellectual, purposeful results effectively altering society. Females, in this capacity, speak back to the old male-dominated system, overruling its processes. This queering of society through female innovation is integral in dislocating the legacy of the female perpetuating a society without affecting change. Intellectual alteration is progress.

The narrative, in preparing for an ending that reconciles with our known history of modern Japan, does not follow through on all potential progresses, leaving open spaces for consideration of potentiality; Yoshinaga first highlights one of these spaces through the sexual assault of a medical scholar and main character, a man who is not male and punished for this. This character starts on the periphery, cheekily confusing his later colleague when it comes to sex and his obvious masculine appearance (Yoshinaga 9:31). The series profiles female characters having to pass as male, from the third shogun to a vassal and an actor, but the medical scholar is the first person who appears to don, and more importantly maintain, masculinity of his own volition. The scholar also participates in a romantic relationship that is queer, although unseen, highly unusual in a series where panels feature sexual activity (Yoshinaga 9:75). This relationship is closest to modern Western conceptions of a Lesbian partnership, the only one in the series, doubly marking his queerness, an asset to status in a world queering. On his way to the home of a Dutch coworker, carrying a vaccination that could prevent the pox, three otherwise diseased males sent by a recently scorned lover rape him (Yoshinaga 10:49-50). The destruction of his sexual autonomy through aggression is easy to appropriate as foreshadowing the effect of the vaccination, progress towards a "cure's" completion already undoing the transitions of Yoshinaga's speculative Japan. Queerly sexual masculine females and their interactions with those gendered "woman" or "femme" is a threat to patriarchy as well as heterosexist and -sexual mythologies, resulting in violent policing against it, as seen with the scholar and his female ex-lover relying on the violence of the previous form of masculinity to punish the new (Halberstam 28-29). Embodying a new, productive, queer masculinity intimate with queer female sexuality in silence, his presence calls attention to a lacking language of change. The message is that unrecognized advancements lead to previously possible violences.

The second space Yoshinaga brings attention to is transnational, the relationship between Japan and economic colonialism enacted by Europe.

Postcolonial and transnational feminist theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty's analysis of Western feminism aids in approaching this space, Mohanty assessing that Western feminism works within its own counterhistory and that, within that counterhistory, colonized women never advance past objectivity (577). Western feminism attempts to ally with women in the rest of the world, endeavoring to claim a shared history of its own machination, collectivizing the oppression of women as an invariable global trend. As if she is speaking back to conclusions and universality in Western feminism, the female-transitioning empire created through Yoshinaga's narrative does not manifest in the rest of the world. The documented closing off of Japan during this period remains, blamed in this story on the ahistorical pox which leaves, as one advisor says euphemistically, "our country's manhood . . . severely reduced" (3:27). Japan, in both histories, refuses economic colonialism by rejecting participation. The sexing of this rejection in the counterhistory, though, acts as a link between Japanese females and global economics, where femaleness has a history in commodification, from domestic labor to (in the novels) business control. By severing this link between sex and its value on the global market, capital no longer defines the female body. Decapitalization is the most effective method to elevate the status of females in society, the decolonization of female bodies an effort to rename the body as more than a biological machine or an object for trade.

Yoshinaga highlights the incongruous and disheartening downfall of the speculative Japan of *Ōoku* through the characters' unshakable relationships with previous power structures, the threat of heteropatriarchy always looming because of its persistence in the ruling class. Using economic controls and the diction created by the oppressor is the utilization of the "master's tools," as Audre Lorde phrases this irony, these tools belying change while a false sense of security falls over those who find accommodation in the "master's house" (112). Throughout *Ōoku*, the queering of femaleness and female sexuality constantly struggles against legacies of male domination and heterosexuality, explored from those in poverty to higher classes. The female ruling class, though, having inherited the male power of the shogun, are comfortable in a space they feel they do not divinely deserve but realistically have (accommodated in the undead heteropatriarchal structure); from this place of comfort, the female ruling class instates a male as the eleventh shogun, history resumed because of the vaccination created by the models of the counterhistory (a Dutch male-loving male doctor, an also—but differently—queer masculine scholar, and a non-reproductive female shogun) (Yoshinaga 10:249-50). Those with the power of destroying the skeleton of heteropatriarchy become its mortal victims, their annihilations aided by an upper class that benefits from the total reinstatement of the previous structure in the wake of queer medical and female technological innova-

tion. Female empowerment and queer advancements in this speculative history officially end, reset by remaining elements of capital-classism and the societal silence that refutes the work that goes into queering. Relying on those with definable power to change society (or, at least, acknowledge change within it) is not enough to maintain a system of transformations.

The narrative of Fumi Yoshinaga's historical Japan reborn provides a contextualized yet fantastic view of female empowerment already equipped with potential successes and failures ready for postpartum analyses. A large part of the empowerment of females in *Ōoku* is the queering of female sexuality, providing female agency that does not need to include female reproductive capacities. Through the sexual liberation of females, the necessity for an intellectual framework that links immaterial uniqueness with the body manifests (paired with the need to break systems of ascription in value and identity). Ultimately, Yoshinaga's counterhistory considers the uselessness of relying on old structures of domination to support transformations, which has to be a total, natural disintegration of roles dictated by heteropatriarchy. Like the pox she employs to commence the picturesque ten volume graphic novel series of her transitioning Japan, Fumi Yoshinaga insinuates that queer female empowerment must be antithetical to modern fantasies of complacency, productive over generative, articulated over artless.

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Are We Straight Now? A Classification of Queer Representation in *The Kids Are All Right* (2010) as Queer Cinema or LGBT film

Sabine Elisabeth Aretz, University of Bonn

"Our intention was not overtly political. The subversion, as we saw it, was to be nonpolitical, and just to make this human story that was about a family that people could relate to, no matter what your identity or your sexual preferences were."

—qtd.in Walters 924

This comment, made by *The Kids Are All Right* (2010) director and co-writer Lisa Cholodenko, contains a major point of discussion regarding her third feature film. On the one hand, the film was praised by mainstream reviews as groundbreaking, mainly for not focusing on the main protagonists' sexual orientation. Roger Ebert, for instance, comes to the conclusion that *The Kids Are All Right* is not "a gay film" and Andrew O'Hehir argues that it "ranks with the most compelling portraits of an American marriage, regardless of sexuality, in film history." Furthermore, the film was awarded several accolades, among which are two Golden Globes and four Academy Award nominations, including "Best Screenplay" and "Best Picture" (Campbell and Carilli 48-49). On the other hand, the universal and depoliticizing portrayal of a non-heterosexual family was met with opposition within the context of queer cinema. Critics argue that the film perpetuates homonormativity by situating its queer content within a heteronormative framework (Kennedy). Here, the argument revolves around the changes of 21st century mainstream films featuring queer characters, in which some critics view the normalizing depiction of queer characters to be reductive (Dean).

The Kids Are All Right tells the story of a family consisting of two moms, Nic (Annette Bening) and Jules (Julianne Moore) and their two children,

18-year-old Joni (Mia Wasikowska) and her younger brother Laser (Josh Hutcherson). The family meets the sperm donor Paul (Mark Ruffalo) with whom Jules starts an affair, causing trouble in the already tense marriage. Eventually, Paul develops feelings for Jules, but she rejects him and reunites with Nic.

Moving forward, *Queer Cinema*, particularly *New Queer Cinema*, will first be defined and discussed with a focus on its history and the element of independent versus mainstream productions. This essay will then distinguish Queer Cinema and New Queer Cinema from *LGBT film* in order to situate *The Kids Are All Right* within this discourse by analyzing the film's queer representation with regards to homonormativity and potential elements of appropriation.

In relation to the discussion about the film's role within Queer Cinema, this essay will argue that although the acceptance of queer content found in *The Kids Are All Right* can be traced back to the success of early New Queer Cinema, which allowed for queer themes to be include in mainstream films, the film does not feature the characteristics that distinguish a film as queer. Consequently, this separates it from the origins of New Queer Cinema in a way that does not allow for it to be viewed as a 'second wave' of the early queer film movement. Rather, the film shows a different approach to queer representation, loosely fitting within the genre of LGBT film.

QUEER CINEMA

The term "queer," as it is used in the context of queer theory and Queer Cinema, is an umbrella term and describes "any sexuality not defined as heterosexual procreative monogamy" (Benshoff and Griffin, "General Introduction," 2). It was first used to describe sexuality with a derogatory connotation in the late 19th century, until self-identified queer people reclaimed the term in the late 1980s (Kuhn and Westwell). Thus, many theorists stress the inherent political meaning in the term "queer," pointing it out as a part of social activism and acts of defiance (Aaron 6; Morrison 136; Kemp 9-10). Queer activism is thus set aside from activism that solely focuses on gay and lesbian identities. Denise Levy and Corey Johnson explain,

> the lesbian and gay political agenda . . . only allows for assimilation or incorporation into society's dominant or normative structures. Queer politics, on the other hand, focuses on eliminating oppression by radically disrupting and transforming society's norms and hierarchical structures altogether. (130)

Accordingly, queer film revolves around defying what was seen as conventional themes, both in content and representation as well as structure

and form (Juett and Jones x). Queer film is therefore defined through the traditional practices it contests, and exists as the opposite. Queer cinema, as James Morrison argues, aspires to broaden representations of non-conforming sexuality, not only beyond heterosexuality but also beyond gay and lesbian identities (141). James Joseph Dean further established that the representations in queer cinema are not done in an attempt to normalize, but rather to focus on depicting new ways of understanding sexualities (383). Furthermore, Michele Aaron and James Joseph Dean argue that queer cinema challenges heteronormativity, specifically heteronormative narratives portrayed in mainstream Hollywood films as well as homosexual content depicted within the same heteronormative patterns (Aaron 5; Dean 383). Critique, opposition and a political nature are thus inherent to queer cinema.

To further discuss the genre, this chapter will examine the New Queer Cinema movement of the early 1990s and its specific characteristics that distinguish it from LGBT film. Here, a discussion of the elements classifying films within the categories of queer cinema and LGBT film is necessary in order to eventually regard *The Kids Are All Right* in this context.

NEW QUEER CINEMA

First coined by scholar and queer film critic B. Ruby Rich in 1992, New Queer Cinema describes a wave of films that feature various forms of queer content and gained critical success during the film festivals of the early 1990s (Aaron 3). Rich explains,

> [t]here, suddenly, was a flock of films that were doing something new, renegotiating subjectivities, annexing whole genres revising histories in their image . . . Of course, the new queer films and videos aren't all the same and don't share a single aesthetic vocabulary, strategy or concern. Nonetheless they are united by a common style . . . In all of them, there are traces of appropriation, pastiche, and irony, as well as reworking of history with social constructionism very much in mind. Definitively breaking with older humanist approaches and the films and tapes that accompanied identity politics, these works are irreverent, energetic, alternately minimalist, and excessive. (18)

Taking this as the beginning of the movement, New Queer Cinema films are defined by their otherness. Further, the connection to already critically acclaimed and mainly mainstream films in the form of pastiche and appropriation grounds itself in Rich's description of the early New Queer Cinema. Thus, the films are defined through distinction, similarly to how

the term "queer" is defined by negation, and stand in contrast to the mainstream. Additionally, the importance of appropriating content and style used in non-queer films mirrors the re-appropriation through which the term "queer" gained its current meaning and use. Considering this, the importance of defying and challenging measure comes into focus. As critic Karl Soehnlein noted in 1990, filmmakers were using "provocative subject matter—transgression, gender-bending, and rude activism—to create challenging visions of sexual identity" (66). Ruby Rich also stresses the "breaking [of] aesthetic barriers" (43) in New Queer Cinema films.

Most significantly, New Queer Cinema focuses on queer representation to defy marginalization, gay stereotypes, and restricted portrayals of non-traditional sexualities and gender expressions (Juett and Jones x; Nowlan 3). Ultimately, New Queer Cinema thus challenges mainstream Hollywood films. Understanding queer "as critical intervention, cultural product and political strategy," Michele Aaron describes New Queer Cinema as "an art-full manifestation of the overlap between the three" (6). New Queer Cinema thus shares the same inherent political character as the term "queer" itself.

The films of the New Queer Cinema in the 1990s often thematize issues that concerned the queer community during that time. Kimberly Behzadi identifies a demand for acceptance, equality, and adequate representation as significant focuses of the films of the New Queer Cinema movement (4). Michele Aaron, once again in reference to Ruby Rich, points out that the films' attitudes are the most significant trait when it comes to characterizing New Queer Cinema (3). In accordance with the term "queer" and the history of the movement, Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell identify experimental forms, structures and narrative techniques as well as exploration in content as important traits. Additionally, these scholars point out that New Queer Cinema presents its representation for an assumed queer audience. This offers the platform for representing "marginalised [communities] not simply in terms of focusing on the lesbian and gay community, but on the sub-groups contained within it" (Aaron 3-4).

New Queer Cinema is, according to Aaron, "unapologetic" (3) and, according to James Hoberman, "proudly assertive" (31), leading to the conclusion that

> the aggressiveness with which the core films of New Queer Cinema assert homosexual identity and queer culture [is what] distinguishes them from earlier queer films . . . These films not only aggressively assert queer identities, but they also demand an acknowledgement of queer culture. (Claude Summers ed. 221)

As Ruby Rich did in her initial recognition of New Queer Cinema, Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell also stress the elements of intertextuality, pastiche, and irony. Hence, the political nature and elements of defiance, established through repeated reference to the society that New Queer Cinema criticizes, are significant characteristics of the genre. Aaron argues that "it is not simply that a sense of defiance characterizes these films, but that it marks them as queer" (5). Further, Kuhn and Westwell point out that New Queer Cinema is not only breaking with a lack of representation but also with the patterns and themes of the existing representation. This includes an appropriation of non-queer, mainstream narratives as well as the reclaiming of negative queer stereotypes (Kuhn and Westwell; Aaron 4). Representation of diverse sexual and gender identities is therefore a prominent characteristic of New Queer Cinema.

The 1990 documentary *Paris Is Burning* by Jennie Livingston is mentioned as a flagship of the movement (Benshoff and Griffin, "General Introduction," 11; Oishi 252; Benshoff and Griffin, *Queer Images,* 262). Although controversially discussed, the film has received several awards and remains among the most influential of New Queer Cinema (Clark). *Paris Is Burning* documents the drag ball culture of the African-American and Latino queer community in the late 1980s. Most notably, *Paris Is Burning* thematizes gender performance, specifically non-binary and non-conforming expressions, while redefining "realness" (Evans and Gamman 218; Flinn 439). The film's progressive and, according to some critics, provocative character (Keyssar 130; Benshoff and Griffin, *Queer Images,* 262) lies in bringing visibility to an otherwise marginalized community and disrupting heteronormativity. The subject matter itself offers elements of parody, pastiche, and appropriation.

Another film named as shaping the New Queer Cinema is *Poison* (1991) by director Todd Haynes, which won the Sundance Film Festival Grand Prize in 1991 (Benshoff and Griffin, *Queer Images*, 229). Unlike *Paris Is Burning*, *Poison* is strongly characterized by breaking traditional forms of storytelling within its genre. The film contains science fiction, drama and horror elements through three intercut narratives, each adapting historic cinematic styles. The film features upfront representations of gay male sexuality and is considered "unapologetic" (Aaron 4). As Glyn Davis points out, "with its fractured tripartite structure, playful pastiche and generic conventions, and appropriative reworking of gay literary history, [*Poison*] rather neatly fitted Rich's definition" (184).

Similarly unapologetic about its characters' faults and even murderous actions is *The Living End* (1992) by director Gregg Araki. *The Living End* thematizes AIDS, nihilistic world views, and aggression towards social norms while adapting the Hollywood road movie trope featuring two gay

anti-heroes, graphic sex and violence (Benshoff and Griffin, "General Introduction," 11-2; Nault 212-6).

Additional films worth mentioning in this regard are, for instance, *Swoon* (1992), *The Hours and the Times* (1992) and *My Own Private Idaho* (1991) (Beynon and Eisner 496). Although the films of the early New Queer Cinema got attention during film festivals and in independent film circles and were followed by an increase of queer-themed productions, ". . . [an] *enduring* sector of popular radical work failed to materialize" (Rich 85). Rich went as far as to declare the end of New Queer Cinema by the early 2000s, regarding it as a "moment" rather than a movement (Juett 61).

However, at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century, several commercially successful and critically acclaimed queer-themed productions were discussed within the New Queer Cinema genre, for instance, *Boys Don't Cry* (1999), *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), and *Transamerica* (2005). These films sparked a debate about the changes of queer cinema and how these movies, regarded as less experimental and more mainstream, fit into the genre. As the early New Queer Cinema films had all been independent and low-budget productions characterized by their defiance and targeted to a non-straight audience, the categorization of mainstream films as part of the New Queer Cinema was put into question.

JoAnne Juett argues that the queer elements of New Queer Cinema had been appropriated by Hollywood and resulted in more queer-themed mainstream productions (62). Thus, the development from independent to mainstream can be regarded as originating out of New Queer Cinema (Juett 60-4), which stresses New Queer Cinema as an evolving genre. Nevertheless, the history of defiance in New Queer Cinema suggests that the independent character of the early films is inherent to the genre. As Michele Aaron argues, "New Queer Cinema must be contested that it can endure, it must remain marginal that it can flirt effectively with the center" (10). James Morrison also refers back to queer theory itself, stressing the aspect of marginalization that constructed the movement in the first place (10). Furthermore, Stuart Richards argues that Hollywood's adapting queer themes was a response to the counter-hegemonic character of the traditional New Queer Cinema in order to demonstrate and reclaim its dominating power (21). Ultimately, Richards claims that the production of these new queer-themed films treat its queer narrative as "a stigma, which . . . strategic marketing campaigns *must* overcome to appeal to a mass audience" (28). Thus, he frames queer narrative and an appeal to a mainstream audience as mutually exclusive. JoAnne Juett and David Jones, whereas, regard the production and success, both critically and commercially, of more mainstream queer-themed films as "reemergence" of New Queer Cinema (xi). They argue that, although less radical and more

appealing to straight audiences than the films of the New Queer Cinema during the early 1990s, these mainstream films have still "broken barriers and challenged audiences" (xi).

Seen in a narrow sense, the early wave of the New Queer Cinema exists exclusively within independent films. This inherently eliminates a broader development and situates New Queer Cinema solely within the early 1990s independent productions. Nevertheless, New Queer Cinema as a movement allowed for queer-themed mainstream productions (Juett and Jones xii). Even when not regarded as New Queer Cinema, the queer content in mainstream films of the 21st century is also subject to discussion regarding its potential to defy societal norms and represent marginalized communities. Thus, a nuanced look into what makes a film queer, including the distinction between LGBT film and queer film, ensues.

QUEER CINEMA IN CONTRAST TO LGBT FILM

In aiming to find a definition for queer cinema, David Pendleton argues for a distinction between queer and gay cinema. In this argument, he describes gay cinema as portraying gay and lesbian lives in regular, "realistic" setting (49). The main difference lies in the content's potential and intent to provoke, stressing the overt political character of queer film. What Pendleton calls gay cinema, Josh Byron defines as LGBT film. Byron, similarly, points out that queer film does not aim to normalize queerness or homosexuality, while LGBT film "does not claim to be . . . as revolutionary as queer film's ethos". In this sense, queer film is distinguished from other films with LGBT characters, in which, Suzanne Walters argues, gay protagonists are "being portrayed just like straights" (qtd. in Dean 381). In marked contrast to New Queer Cinema, LGBT film is said to aim for the normalization of its LGBT characters (Byron). Steven Seidman points out that LGBT films portray gay and lesbian characters in the context of conventional gender presentation and relationships (Dean 381). Scholars argue that LGBT films portray queerness mostly with a focus on cis-gendered gay or lesbian sexuality in a normalizing fashion and heterosexual context.

In conclusion, the connection between queer theory and queer cinema, as well as the inherent political character of both, proves to be of significant importance. Hence, a clear distinction between cinematic content that portrays queerness in a heterosexual context and that is viewed as normalizing homosexuality by connecting it to heterosexuality, here branded LGBT film, and queer film that portrays a more oppositional relationship with heterosexuality, is both evident and necessary. This distinction leaves the investigation of what extent the elements and representation shown in *The Kids Are All Right* fit either of these categories.

QUEER REPRESENTATION IN *THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT*

The Kids Are All Right contains queer representation in the sense that the fictional family portrayed in the movie consists of self-identified lesbian mothers and their children. Nevertheless, the actual realization and representation of the narrative, including and beyond the presence of two lesbian main protagonists, demands further investigation in order to categorize the film within the LGBT or queer film spectrum.

The film's queer representation is contested in reviews, which perceive *The Kids Are All Right*'s main narrative focus as shifting away from the film's queer content. For instance, some reviews argue that the film "transcends sexual orientation and gender identity and is really about family" (qtd. in Holmes 58). This reading, which, according to Tara Holmes, represents the consensus of most mainstream reviews, can be argued to deny the film its queerness and brings the queer representation in question.

However, it could be argued that the very self-evidence with which the film's queerness is portrayed is the core of the film's queerness when read as an unapologetic presentation of non-straight identity. *The Kids Are All Right* presents a rarity within the mainstream comedy genre by featuring two non-straight main protagonists. By shifting the focus away from Nic and Jules's sexual identity, their lesbianism does not present itself as the conflict or topic of the story as it is hardly explicitly addressed. As previously argued, queer film needs to be regarded in a broader context. Seeing *The Kids Are All Right* in the context of other 21st century mainstream comedies, the portrayal of a same-sex relationship in film which does not focus on narratives solely based on or tied to the sexual identity of the queer characters contains a queerness that breaks with other cinematic LGBT representations within that time and genre. Consequently, it is necessary to analyze whether *The Kids Are All Right* transcends sexual orientation or dismisses it in a way that lessens queer representation.

Nic and Jules's sexuality can first be identified as non-heterosexual during the family introductory scene, where Nic comes home when the family is eating dinner and kisses Jules (03:06). Furthermore, the dinner setting, which features Nic talking about work and a seemingly trivial discussion about their daughter Joni writing "Thank You" notes, leads the audience to read them as a domestic, monogamous married couple and loving parents (2:44-5:11). The family context, along with the tension between Nic and Jules, is therefore the starting point of the narrative.

The following scene, in which Nic and Jules agree to watch gay male porn while attempting to have sex, addresses their sexuality more specifically (07:00-08:31). Although revealing sexual problems in their marriage, another element stressing their domestic commitment as 'typical,' this scene also introduces another aspect of queerness. By showing two non-straight

women watching gay male porn to get sexually aroused, the film breaks with more romanticized images of a married couple's sex life and combines female sexual pleasure with gay male sexuality. The topic is later taken up again after Laser finds a DVD of gay male porn in his parents' room and asks them about it. Jules tries to explain, saying,

> human sexuality is complicated and sometimes desire can be coun-ter-intuitive. You know, for example, women's sexual responsiveness is internalized, sometimes it's exciting to us to see responsiveness externalized. Like, like with a penis. (23:28-49)

Jules's statement suggests that this element functions to address the complex-ity of human sexuality. The aspect arguably breaks with stereotypes of other comedies while focusing on a queer characteristic. In addition, this approach takes away a potential male gaze of lesbian sexuality and does not portray a lesbian love scene through the lens of straight male voyeuristic pleasure.

However, both the "sex scene" as well as the narrative element of Nic and Jules watching gay male porn have been a source of controversy among reviews. Lisa Duggan called it "the worst lesbian sex scene in the history of cinema" (qtd. in Kennedy 129) while Jaspir Puar and Karen Tongson claim that the scene made a "smart intertextual intervention that references the vexed representational history of lesbian sex on screen" (qtd. in Kennedy 129). This underlines Lisa Cholodenko's choice as a controversial break of common mainstream depictions of a married couple's sex life.

Nevertheless, the scene ultimately serves a comedic function when Nic and Jules accidentally turn the volume up (08:08). Further, the scene stands alone as the films only non-heterosexual 'sex scene'. The depiction of heterosexual intercourse, however, is much more explicit and passionate (10:49-11:01; 55:27-56:05; 01:03:33-03:53). Here, the film's focus on the heterosexual affair between Jules and Paul becomes evident. In this regard, the representation does not focus on queer sexuality.

The film's focus on Jules's heterosexual affair rather than the same-sex marriage has been criticized (Eaklor 161-64). Tammie Kennedy concludes that the film appears to target a straight audience and categorizes *The Kids Are All Right* as "'visibility' within the heterosexual gaze" (119). Tara Holmes, however, argues that at the core of the film the affair functions to push boundaries on lesbian self-identification. According to this argument, the key moment is when Jules tells Paul "I'm gay" and hangs up the phone after their affair has ended and he confesses his feelings in an attempt to be with her (01:26:13-26:33). Holmes claims that because the film explicitly portrays Jules and Paul's sexual relationship and Jules does not question her identity as a lesbian, it argues for a broader understanding of categories

of sexual identities and the importance of self-identification. While it is evident that Jules does not struggle with her self-identification as "gay," as she dismisses Nic's question "Are you straight now?" (01:21:57) by answering "It has nothing to do with that," this aspect only takes up a minor part of the film's narrative and can hardly be argued to be the focus or moral. Both the early establishment of Nic and Jules's marital problems, as well as Jules's confession "I just needed . . . [to be] appreciated" (01:22:20), make it clear that film revolves around the affair itself, not the queerness of the same-sex marriage or the heterosexuality of the affair.

The last scene between Nic and Paul (01:31:25-35:15) offers the resolution needed to end the affair narrative so that Paul is out of the picture. By showing the family driving Joni to her college dorm room, tearfully saying goodbye and showing affection on the way back, the film closes with a family scenario, similarly phrased as 'ordinary' as the opening family dinner scene, revealing that the relationship ultimately goes back to their initial structure. Thus, the queer content, mainly presented by the presence of the two self-identified lesbian mothers, is consequently embedded within a conventional framework, which conforms to society. Here, the element of normalizing the main protagonists' queerness and the queerness of their family by depicting them as functioning as heteronormative comes into question. Hence, a look into the film's portrayal of homonormativity ensues.

PORTRAYAL OF HOMONORMATIVITY

The concept of homonormativity can be defined as

> a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption. (Duggan qtd. in Fine 180)

Hence, homonormativity stands in contrast to queer film, especially New Queer Cinema, in which a quality of defiance against heteronormative structures and portrayals of queerness within those structures is central. Furthermore, homonormativity is often linked to depoliticizing queer identity as well as normalizing queerness in a way that reduces it to gender conforming homosexuality (Fine 178-80; Kennedy 119-24; Walters 923-26), which further emphasizes a homonormative narrative as the opposite of the characteristics attributed to queer cinema.

The Kids Are All Right is often criticized for depicting a lesbian couple that emulates heterosexuality in their dynamic and family structure (Walters 923-4.). Suzanna Walters, for example, sees the love story as "essentially

heterosexual" (923). The narrative revolves around a white upper middle-class nuclear family consisting of two parents and two children, situated within the suburbs. Therefore it stands to reason that it would function within a homonormative portrayal.

The films starts with the camera following Laser and his friend on their bike and skateboard through a seemingly suburban street (00:30-1:01). "The Kids Are All Right" appears on the screen with a shot of a broad street with several houses and front yards in the background. With the ending of the opening credits, the shot shows the front of a big home, a truck standing in front of the garage and another car, a mini-van, pulling up (02:34). Thus, the films setting within the suburbs and focus on family life becomes evident.

Staying within that framework, the family values and the family unit as the film's conventional standpoints become particularly visible in the dinner scene with Paul and in contrast to him. Nic asks him about his business, saying "I remember when I was reading your file back when we were looking for, you know, sperm . . . you said that you were studying international relations" (28:32-52) and is obviously shocked when he answers he dropped out of college and explains he thought it was "a big waste of money" (29:00-40). She continues to ask him questions and reacts judgmentally to his non-family-oriented lifestyle (29:55-30:42). When Jules later states "He's working the alternative thing pretty hard" (35:02), Nic agrees and mocks him (35:03-14). Here, Jules and Nic's status as the conventional parents with middle-class values is stressed through Paul's more free-spirited, alternative, and far less parental character. Through contrast, the normality of Jules's and Nic's life is emphasized.

The aspect of homonormativity is most significantly portrayed in the dynamic between Nic and Jules and the gender roles they adopt and perform in their relationship, as they reveal obvious parallels to the idea of a conventional heterosexual couple in a mainstream comedy. Nic is established as the assertive wine-drinking bread-winner of the family, and Jules is portrayed as unsure and less self-confident (02:44-05:13). As this is the first introduction to the characters, it functions significantly in revealing the gender roles and family structure. Fitting this role allocation, Nic is the one that has short hair while Jules appears more traditionally feminine. Further, Jules reveals that she was the one who stayed home when the kids were born (32:24). Later, in an argument with Nic, she says the decision was largely due to Nic's preference, stating "It's the way you keep control. You hated it when I worked, you wanted me at home, taking care of the kids, you wanted a *wife*" (01:02:45-03:58). An understanding of a heteronormative image of a 'wife' is here presumed and addressed to be Nic's desire, which explicitly underlines their structure and, specifically, their problems within that framework.

Nic's and Jules's dynamic becomes even more evident when they have dinner with a heterosexual couple (59:45-01:02:00). In the scene, Nic reacts visibly annoyed when they are talking about a new trend and rants:

> I just can't with the fucking hemp milk and the organic farming and, you know, if I hear one more person say that they love heir-loom tomatoes, I'm going to fucking kill myself, okay? Oh and do you know that we're composting now? Oh, you know 'Oh don't throw that in the trash, you have to put it in the composting bin where all the beautiful, little worms will turn it into this organic mulch and we will all feel good about ourselves, you know.' I can't. I can't fucking do it. (1:00:46-01:18)

The situation underlines Nic's conservative character and also reveals her as hot-tempered, as she is easily provoked and storms out saying "fuck you" (1:01:40). Furthermore, this scene manifests that Nic and Jules's lives are situated in a heterosexual environment. Indeed, *The Kids Are All Right* fails to depict Nic and Jules as members of the LGBT community by not portraying their lives within lesbian subculture (Walters 926). As James Dean concludes, "mainstream Hollywood film which normalizes gay identity . . . almost always isolate the gay or lesbian character from a larger gay/lesbian subcul-ture" (366). The dynamic portrayed by Nic and Jules turns out to be that of a conventional nuclear family, even at the end of the film, revealing the film's potential to be read as depicting homonormativity. Further, Suzanna Walters argues that the film *relies* on these structures (922-30) rather than depicting the narrative in a way that discusses these elements.

Most significantly, *The Kids Are All Right* uses the dynamic that mirrors a heterosexual marriage in order to normalize the character's queerness. The traditional family structure and the portrayal that allows for Nic and Jules to be classified within the gender binary is necessary. Steven Seidman fur-ther points out that an attempt to normalize queer content is part of Hol-lywood's shift in portraying more queer characters in which their normality is "expected to be gender conventional, link sex to love and marriage-like relationship, defend family values, personify economic individualism and display national pride" (qtd. in Kennedy 119). As the queer aspect of the character is already a break with the heterosexual norm, other conventional elements need to be sustained in order for a film to be read to argue that the queer characters portrayed are essentially normal.

This is most visible in the film's formal and structural cinematic imple-mentation. Cholodenko did not use any experimental forms and stayed within the cinematic conventions of a mainstream Hollywood comedy and continuity editing. *The Kids Are All Right* is told entirely in chronological

order and primarily uses still camera shots, especially during emotion-
ally charged scenes (01:02:07-03:33; 01:21:00-22:59; 01:35:04-37:08).
Conventional shot-reverse-shots with over the shoulder shots are used,
most visibly in scenes focusing on dialogue (19:10-20:00; 28:30-34:30).
With few long shots introducing the setting, most scenes show medium
shots (45:30-47:41) or medium shots when focusing more on a character's
expression (01:18:24-18:37) and close-ups in especially emotional scenes
(01:21:20-21:46).

When asked if the film would be different had it revolved around a het-
erosexual marriage, Cholodenko answered, "I think in all really important
ways, it wouldn't be different. It's a portrait of a marriage, a portrait of a
family . . . It's about . . . how an affair rocks a family" (qtd. in Bryant 488).
This underlines the intention to normalize the queer content. Assuming the
film aimed to normalize its lesbian characters, it does so by "having both
characters fit into stereotypical, normative roles" (Fine 180), working with
the framework of heteronormative structure therefore maintaining them
and essentially portraying homonormativity. It is, however, important to
note that the film, given its portrayal of a white, upper-middle class, gender-
conforming lesbian couple, cannot be argued to aim to normalize queerness
in general but rather the queerness in this particular narrative, which still
works within gay and lesbian identity that queerness aims to broaden.

Tara Holmes contests this reading and particularly Walters's critique,
stating that the "de-gaying" Walters describes presumes a "real gayness" that
the film can then "de-gay" (60). In this regard, Holmes argues that critiqu-
ing the film for its depiction of lesbians in a mostly heterosexual, suburban
environment suggests that these lesbians are less queer and contests the idea
of measuring queer on a scale in general (60). However, investigating the
characters' depiction in context of queer cinema and point out differences
in this regard is not connected to contesting the characters' queerness.

According to Holmes, the portrayal of a lesbian marriage mimicking one
of a heterosexual couple "destabilizes the very idea of heteronormative family
structure" (10) rather than perpetuating homonormativity. In this argu-
ment, she refers to Judith Butler's assessment that heterosexual performance
manifests heterosexuality by imitating itself. This means that an imitation
of heterosexuality by queer people or culture is imitating an imitation, not
an original. As Butler argues, an attempt to copy heterosexuality by queer
people "works neither to copy nor to emulate heterosexuality, but rather,
to expose heterosexuality as an incessant and panicked imitation of its own
naturalized idealization" (362). While Holmes recognizes the hetero- and
homonormative elements of the film's depiction of Nic and Jules's marriage
and family, she argues that their portrayal is not determined by it, mean-
ing the film does not rely on a portrayal within heteronormative structures

(66). Furthermore, she interprets the depiction as a comment on normative family structures (67). Hence, she argues for elements of appropriation, meaning *The Kids Are All Right* uses structures otherwise connected to heterosexual mainstream films to adapt it for its queer content and thus entails extradiegetic commentary on the structures it portrays.

ELEMENTS OF APPROPRIATION

Taking the history of queer cinema into consideration, another way to read the obvious elements of Nic and Jules's family and marriage that mirror the portrayal of heterosexual relationships in mainstream Hollywood films is within the context of appropriation. As previously discussed, among irony and pastiche, appropriation was an important aspect of early New Queer Cinema, and queer cinema in general as it corresponds with the history of the term "queer" itself. Accordingly, many early New Queer Cinema films adapted mainstream elements and genres within a queer film and context, using it as a platform for commentary and critique. For instance, *Swoon* mirrors a scene out of Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) but featuring two gay men (Aaron 4-5).

Hence, approaching the elements previously discussed and often critiqued as homonormative through the lens of appropriation significantly changes the way in which the film can be categorized among queer cinema. However, mirroring or imitating narratives and forms traditionally used and associated with mainstream Hollywood cinema does not necessarily appropriate these elements or include critical commentary. *The Kids Are All Right* lacks elements of pastiche, irony or references to specific works of mainstream comedy film to clearly reveal a queer appropriation of the genre. Moreover, the camera does not reveal a specifically queer or lesbian perspective.

Furthermore, *The Kids Are All Right* situates its genre and features within LGBT representation in the sense that it positions a lesbian couple in the place of a heterosexual marriage. The plot of *The Kids Are All Right* focuses on the universal marital problems and the affair, of which the sexual nature is revealed to be unnecessary for its function as a plot point. This is cinematically executed in a conventional manner, leading to the conclusion that *The Kids Are All Right* does not depend on its main protagonists being queer. Therefore, the clear similarity to cinematic portrayals of heterosexual marriages in the same or comparable genres normalizes the non-straight couple in focus by embedding it in a story that can be applied to a narrative revolving around the challenges of a heterosexual marriage. *The Kids Are All Right* does not appropriate mainstream Hollywood comedies by using its elements and applying it to a queer perspective and thus directly referencing the history of queer cinema and queer theory but rather uses a

lesbian couple to tell a non-specific narrative that fits in with films of the same genre without LGBT main characters and through that can function in a mainstream context.

CONCLUSION

Although there are significant differences between queer representation in the films of the early New Queer Cinema and that in 21st century productions aiming to reach a mainstream audience, the assessment of these differences varies greatly. Depending on the viewpoint, a portrayal being read as normalizing queer identities and experience by comparing them to heterosexuality and heteronormativity in a way that highlights their similarities can either be considered as a step away from queer representation or the further development of queer film. However, regarding the history, elements of defiance, specifically of political nature, stand out so that functioning in a contrasting relationship with conventions and heteronormativity is inherent in queer film.

The Kids Are All Right reveals these elements on a meta level, as the self-evidence with which its main protagonists' lesbianism is dealt with as well as the depiction of a queer family as functioning in a framework applicable to a non-queer narrative is, although not intended to be (see introductory quote by Cholodenko), political in itself. Intradiegetically, however, elements of homonormativity stand out. These elements, although varying in assessment depending on the reading and interpretation, prove to be necessary in order for the film to function among other mainstream comedies.

Furthermore, the film mirrors non-queer productions of a similar genre in narrative structure and cinematic form. This stresses its similarity and the aspect of a normalizing portrayal of queerness. In addition, the narrative itself does not need its main protagonists to be queer. This aspect reveals the self-evidence with which the film treats its queer characters to lessen the significance of their queerness in the narrative.

In conclusion, *The Kids Are All Right,* although having two lesbian main protagonists, does not focus on queer representation but rather disregards aspects of sexual identity in its narrative, apart from Jules's sexual relationship with a man despite self-identifying as gay, and the touch upon the complexity of sexual pleasure combining gay male porn and lesbian sexuality. Hence, it is significantly separated from films of the New Queer Cinema. Furthermore, the representation it contains is in line with gender-conforming gay and lesbian identity, missing key aspects of queer politics. Nevertheless, the acceptance of LGBT-themed films on a mainstream scale as seen in *The Kids Are All Right* can be attributed to New Queer Cinema. However, because the differences between New Queer Cinema and *The Kids Are All Right* regarding their approach for acceptance and visibility; their

aggressiveness; focus of representation and relationship to the mainstream, considering *The Kids Are All Right* as part of a new New Queer Cinema or second wave fail to recognize the essence of the initial movement.

The Kids Are All Right thus falls under the category of LGBT films, most importantly because it features visible lesbian representation. However, this classification needs to be differentiated because of the film's significant focus on a sexual affair between a man and woman. Despite not focusing on its queer representation, both story-wise and visually, the film stands out within the context of commercially successful and critically acclaimed comedies by featuring two lesbian main protagonists. Thus, with this broader context in mind, *The Kids Are All Right* can be viewed as LGBT-themed.

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Welcome to Leith (2015) and its Unanswered Questions about Filmmaking and White Supremacy

Leslie Robertson, University of West Georgia

Only three-square miles in size, Leith, North Dakota remained largely unknown to anyone other than its twenty-five residents and surrounding neighbors until its appearance in the national news. In August 2013, white supremacist Craig Cobb began purchasing land in the tiny town in hopes of creating a planned community of white nationalists. The protests of Leith's outraged citizens clashed with concerns about the First Amendment right to free speech, eventually culminating in a terrifying standoff that resulted in the arrest of Cobb and his partner in crime, Kynan Dutton. The town of Leith's battle against white supremacy captured the interest of the nation and the attention of filmmakers Michael B. Nichols and Christopher K. Walker. Over the next year, the two chronicled the events and ramifications of the attempted takeover of the rural town in their debut film, *Welcome to Leith*.

Upon its initial release at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival, *Leith* garnered positive reviews from critics. *Roger Ebert* writer Brian Tallerico and *Variety* journalist Dennis Harvey praised the documentary for its nuanced direction in its depiction of highly political events. Harvey comments on the film's engaging qualities, noting how *Leith* is "as engrossing as a fictional thriller" — a statement that seems contrary to the nature of the documentary. Documentary scholar Bill Nichols asserts that the line between documentary and fiction film becomes blurred due to a filmmaker's creative and depictive choices (1). The representation of a social reality in documentary, Nichols argues, occurs through visual depiction, ideological portrayal, and—most importantly—through the assertion of viewpoint (2-5). Michael Rabinger further points out that there is no such thing as

an unbiased documentary, but documentary, at its core, "reflects a fascination with, and a profound respect for, actuality. It is the very opposite of escapist entertainment, being committed to the richness and ambiguity of life as it really is" (4). Despite its "engrossing" aesthetics, *Welcome to Leith*'s dramatized nature and complicated structure produce a feature-style narrative packed with contradictions and questions about its production rather than firm opinions about its highly politicized subject. Instead of utilizing their privileged platform to directly probe American truths, filmmakers Nichols and Walker avoid discourse around issues of the first amendment and the ineptitude of the justice system, divorcing their audience from a pressing social conflict by failing to indict a historically threatening and destructive ideology.

In their submission to Sundance, Nichols and Walker classified *Welcome to Leith* as a documentary, yet the film has since been categorized within a number of Hollywood-style feature genres, suggesting the stylistic choices made by the filmmakers ultimately disassociate viewers from the reality of the topic at hand, complicating the authenticity of the documentary. From the opening sequence onward, the film adopts fear-inciting aesthetics that forge the tone throughout. The first scene begins abruptly with cell-phone camera footage of two men—later identified as Cobb and Dutton—walking a rural road, rifles in hand. A startling blare of bass-heavy music follows, accompanied by a series of quickly-spliced, dizzying shots of a bucolic landscape. Non-diegetic 911 calls entangle overlap as callers fearfully tell of two threatening and armed men in the streets of a town called Leith. This distinctively cultivated tone, realized through panicked shot composition and T. Griffin's ominous score, effectively communicates tension and dread during times of narrative conflict between the citizens of the North Dakota town and the invading white supremacists.

Elements of horror blend with true-crime aesthetics during interview segments introducing the citizens of Leith. Each gives a bite-size description of their idyllic life and town, ending with a foreboding statement about the threat Craig Cobb and Kynan Dutton once imposed on them. Two investigators from the Southern Poverty Law Center, serving as expert opinions, emphasize the historic dangers of white supremacy for nearly ten minutes. These sequences are purposefully sinister, intended to evoke fear associated with the threat of white nationalists, and to pique the audience's interest. As Adam Gopnik notes, American viewers possess a "curious double consciousness" that is simultaneously enraptured with and afraid of human violence (qtd. in Murley 152). *Leith* engages the viewer through a heightened drama, allowing the audience to experience the same fear as the townspeople of Leith—the anticipation of violence—while also echoing a model of fascination with that same violence not unlike true crime stories.

This narrativized conflict of victim versus perpetrator—good versus evil—further evokes the western genre. Craig Cobb and his antagonistic crew arrive in the isolated town of Leith only to stir up trouble, mounting to a standoff once the renegade citizens take matters into their own hands. However, *Leith*'s hybridization of horror, true crime, and western aesthetics prevent the film from fully complying with any one genre's ideology, causing the audience to become swept up in the whirlwind of emotion rather than the contemplation of material. The filmmakers fail to choose a consistent theoretical infrastructure, providing the audience with no set assertion of reality the documentary seeks to provide, ultimately rendering viewers ambivalent.

Questions about intended genre might have been forgiven if not for the distressingly confounding production discrepancies in *Leith* that further complicate its narrative. *Welcome to Leith* presents itself as two timelines converging in one film: one that follows the 2013 events as they progressed, and another that reflects upon the trajectory and fallout a year later. At first, this choice seems purposeful; as Louise Spence and Vinicius Navarro note in *Crafting Truth*, documentarians possess the ability to manage information, taking something "concrete" and organizing it into a new, meaningful sequence (161, 165). Nichols and Walker appear to blend the two timelines for informative purposes, contextualizing the events of 2013 with the later ramifications, yet their intentions become complicated when considering the production behind the two timelines filmed.

In February 2014—during Cobb and Dutton's temporary incarceration—Nichols and Walker were featured on a North Dakota radio show where they discussed their filming process thus far. In the interview, the two filmmakers reveal their filmmaking process began on October 31st, 2013 (Fitzgerald). Yet, *Welcome to Leith* begins its recount of the 2013 transgressions with a title card declaring "August"—a motif that continues through the rest of the film. Nichols and Walker were not actually in Leith until two months into the progression of events, and, even more distressingly, the filmmakers were only in Leith for a single week in October (Fitzgerald). This poses a glaring question: Who filmed the remainder of *Leith*? The film's credits list Nichols as the primary cinematographer, acknowledging Walker and four others only as "additional camera;" however, Gregory Bruce, a concerned citizen of North Dakota featured in the film, is the only recognizable name among the list. If, as of February 2014, Nichols and Walker had only spent one week filming in Leith, then the cinematographer and, by default, the director of four months of first-hand footage comprising nearly three-fourths of the film is unaccounted for. Potentially, each scene, interview, or segment could have been filmed by different cinematographers. The lack of transparency surrounding the cinematography of *Leith* calls

into question the intentions of the film. The ideology of the filmmaker is reflected in what they choose to capture; filmmaking produces what Jay Ruby notes as a "culturally constructed reality" that is specific to whoever is holding the camera (qtd. in Sherman 168). If documentaries are, as Bill Nichols asserts, "a sense of what we understand reality itself to have been" (1-2), how could *Leith* possibly assert a coherent argument if it is secretly a jigsaw puzzle of six perspectives?

Welcome to Leith might have redeemed itself from its fluctuating genre and troubling production, had it constructed a substantial argument surrounding its myriad of topical issues. Yet Nichols and Walker fail to pin down a coherent message or propose any valuable input to the situation, signified most prominently through their editing choices and troubling characterization. The film focuses on the families of Ryan and Michelle Schock, and Lee and Heather Cook. Through interviews, both families reveal their fears to the filmmakers; we see Cobb and Dutton's phone numbers posted above the Schock's phone on a note entitled "DO NOT ANSWER." Both families arm themselves in preparation, fully anticipating the need to protect themselves, and after the eventual release of both Cobb and Dutton, their fear is expected to continue.

During the first act of the film, Craig Cobb initially functions as the villain and Kynan Dutton as Cobb's right-hand henchman. The film portrays them as threatening, aggressive, and contradictory in their beliefs. Yet after the arrests of Cobb and Dutton, the film shifts focus to the white supremacists in sequences that are uncomfortably similar to the preceding segments with the Schock and Cook families. An interview with a now-groomed, incarcerated Cobb puts the audience on the other side of a filmic confessional as he begins reflecting on his life during a strangely intimate segment devoid of any dialogue from the unknown interviewer. Later, Dutton's partner, Deborah Henderson, is interviewed while she drives— the camera, again, positioned intimately in the passenger seat in another pseudo-conversational setup. Deborah discusses feeling ostracized in a place she and her family are simply trying to make their home. Dutton is eventually released on a plea bargain; a spliced-in newsreel shows his heartfelt, in-court plea to be reunited with his family. Sometime after his release, the film shows the now-freed terrorist in his kitchen, baking and discussing his aspirations of opening his own restaurant. He is shown with his wife and son, talking about homework. Dutton himself articulates what this sequence seeks to convey: "We National Socialists cook normal food and eat normal things, do normal activities." These interviews seem intent on looking deeper into the lives of those initially characterized as threats, asking viewers to offer sympathy and respect to the same individuals who paraded the streets of a small town, guns in hand, in order to assert their

dominance. To complicate this further, the sequence of Dutton and Henderson with their child immediately precedes that of the Schock household, showing Mayor Ryan cooking and interacting with his family in an uncomfortably similar way. As Spence and Navarro note, "editing also reshapes and manipulates material. And when the material is nonfiction, editing can redefine sociohistorical reality" (161). Because this sympathetic characterization is situated after establishing the threat of white supremacy but before both Cobb and Dutton are fully released, it implicates a causal effect for their minimal punishment and suggests that the court's decision to release the two domestic terrorists was a sound one. Further, the film suggests a purported significance to the fact that Dutton likes to cook and that Cobb was abused by his father, as if either of those somehow negate the destructive ideology both men propagate. Which depiction of Cobb, Dutton, and Henderson is most accurate: the version where they are shown as the cause of fear, or the version where they are family loving, ideological separatists and just maybe "odd," to use Cobb's own description? Nichols and Walker never answer this question. At each documentary's core is an argument for a view of reality, a suggested "new [view] of our common world to explore and understand," as Bill Nichols articulates, yet *Welcome to Leith* offers no substantial opinion for viewers to consider (26). In the filmmakers' radio interview, Nichols said "we're coming in and trying to tell an objective story as best we can and get both sides," but in their efforts to "objectively" recount the story of Leith, they fail to utilize their position to interrogate the events they examine, leading to the conclusion that Nichols and Walker lack the ability to create a consistent viewpoint as documentarians (Fitzgerald).

The resounding question solicited by *Welcome to Leith* is not one about social issues but one of intent and opinion: What is the purpose of *Welcome to Leith*? What is the present function of documentary and the responsibility of its filmmakers? As Rabinger notes, "The documentary is . . . a vitally dramatic form of factual argument. In a pluralistic society committed to principles of free speech, it plainly has a vital role to play in forming public opinion," but by creating a shaky hybridization of a monster movie true-crime-western-documentary about a very real and present cultural situation, Nichols and Walker fail to formalize their stance on Cobb and other hate groups, legal questions around domestic terrorism and free speech, and bureaucratic functionality (10). Their position as filmmakers allow them the platform to contextualize an impactful moment in American history, but instead, their documentary is no more than an aestheticized regurgitation of the nightly news that ultimately becomes a part of the failed justice system that neglected to fully punish Cobb and Dutton. Brian Tallerico articulates this idea in his review: "As the world gets more crowded and

intolerance shows no signs of dissipating, what we will do when we see a bit of the drama in Leith in our own cities? Or maybe it's too late to even ask that question." If those dedicated to examining social realities fail to assert a viewpoint about dangerous ideology, what can an audience take away from such a film?

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