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“Reading Science, Reading Philosophy”: Applying the Anthropic Principle to Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*

| Jessica Wojtysiak

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To physicists and philosophers, the anthropic principle provides support for modal realism, the view that unobserved worlds, although not actual, exist as possible worlds (Barrow 22). The anthropic principle refines the evaluation of possible works by recognizing the privileged status of the observer (Bostrom 44). The actual world is the observed world and observers can only observe the world in which they exist. Literary critics regularly engage in the “world-constructing enterprise” generally associated with the evaluation of possible worlds (Dolezel ix). Some post-structuralist critics advocate the application of possible worlds theory as a critical tool to advance narratological analysis, most typically applying possible worlds theory to examine thematic and narrative elements within science fiction (Ryan 633). However, despite its close connection to possible worlds theory, the anthropic principle has not yet been tested by literary critics. This paper attempts to fill this gap within literary criticism by applying the anthropic principle as a narratological tool to Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*.

To begin, scholarly disagreement over the appropriate definition of the anthropic principle necessitates clarification of its meaning.

As originally articulated by astrophysicist Brandon Carter, the anthropic principle merely stated that “what we can expect to observe must be restricted by the conditions necessary for our presence as observers” (qtd. in Bostrom 44). However, the anthropic principle has been refined into weak and strong versions as well as formulations limiting the set of possible observers to, alternatively, human life, intelligent life, and carbon-based life forms (Bostrom 45-48). Analytic philosopher Nick Bostrom identifies no less than 30 versions of the anthropic principle. Carter certainly did not intend to limit the observers of the universe to human beings, and this arbitrary change to the principle undermines its tautological significance. For the purposes of this project, the anthropic principle is operationally defined as the recognition that observations of the universe are constrained by the conditions which enable the existence of observers. In other words, observers can only observe a universe in which they exist. They cannot observe a universe in which they do not exist or any universe that does not contain the conditions that enable their existence.

Initially, *Mrs. Dalloway* may appear an odd choice for this critical exercise. After all, Carter first introduced the idea of the anthropic principle in 1974, long after the initial publication of *Mrs. Dalloway* in 1925 (Bostrom 44). However, several aspects of the text support the application of the anthropic principle to Woolf’s novel. First, the anthropic principle coheres with the novel’s treatment of science as an essential element of human society. Woolf’s narrative threads frequently identify an enthusiasm for scientific and technological innovation. Peter Walsh confidently asserts that young men “reading science, reading philosophy” control the fate of the world (Woolf 49). During his observation of the streets and people of London, Septimus Warren Smith declares that “one must be scientific, above all scientific” (Woolf 21). Even the omniscient narrator interjects to reference the work of Einstein and scholarly advances in mathematics as part of a wider effort by humanity to expand the scope of its reach (Woolf 27). The novel’s presentation of science as an important force driving the intellectual advancement of human society suggests that Woolf would welcome a critical effort to bridge

the interdisciplinary gap dividing literary criticism from science.

The skywriting incident that occurs early in the narrative marries the text's interest in scientific accomplishment to the status of the characters as observers. In response to the airplane writing in the sky, unnamed persons stop on the streets of London to attempt to decipher the message: "As they looked the whole world became perfectly silent" (Woolf 20). In 1922, skywriting was a new technological achievement. In an illustration of how two observers can disagree over the nature of a shared observation, Mrs. Coates and Mrs. Bletchley argue over the meaning of the skywriting. Their disagreement is not unlike the disagreement that arises when two scientists observe the same phenomenon but disagree on its meaning. In such cases, the only recourse is to attempt to gather further information, through additional observation, in order to solve the dilemma.

The anthropic principle is also consistent with the non-theistic worldview espoused by the novel's primary characters. As Bostrom observes, the anthropic principle is arguably both "anti-theological and anti-teleological" (48). The anthropic principle assigns an observer function to human beings that does not depend upon a creator God. The cast of *Mrs. Dalloway* is dominated by non-believers. Clarissa Dalloway's status as an atheist is confirmed by both her personal reflection and Peter's description of her views. Clarissa is unrepentant in her rejection of Christianity and "not for a moment did she believe in God" (Woolf 29). Her hatred of Miss Kilman is partially justified by the fear that the older woman may convert Clarissa's daughter. Clarissa's atheism is such an intrinsic part of her character that Peter views it as its own type of religion, a dogma that compels Clarissa to engage in charitable activities (Woolf 76).

Clarissa is not the novel's only skeptic. Peter Walsh shares Clarissa's disdain for organized religion and is "by conviction an atheist perhaps" (Woolf 55). The religious perspectives of Septimus Warren Smith and Richard Dalloway are less clearly defined but they share a common fear that human life may have no inherent purpose or meaning. For Septimus, the possibility of

a world without meaning is a frightening possibility: “It might be possible, Septimus thought... it might be possible that the world itself is without meaning” (Woolf 86). Richard elevates Smith’s acknowledgement of the possible to the status of the highly probable when he recognizes the “worthlessness of this life” (Woolf 111). Neither man advances the possibility of a divine purpose for human existence.

Woolf’s experimentation with free indirect discourse as a narrative structure is consistent with the anthropic principle’s emphasis upon the privileged status of the observer. Through free indirect discourse, Woolf represented “the point of view from which we necessarily read real minds, as opposed to literary, transparent minds” (Edmondson 20). Instead of opting to focus upon just one limited or omniscient mind to deliver information to her readers, Woolf leads the reader on a journey through many different, often conflicting, consciousnesses. The reader’s knowledge of the minds of the characters is never perfect, nor is it complete. Instead, the reader must determine how best to interpret the nuggets of information so thriftily proffered.

The anthropic principle elucidates the purpose of Woolf’s fictional characters: to observe their fictional world. They offer unique perspectives that could not be expressed by any other observer. They then communicate their observations to the reader. Each shift into a new character’s consciousness enables the reader to learn about the fictional universe from another observer. Clarissa Dalloway provides the center for the fictional world’s observers, connecting them in often unexpected ways. As Vereen Bell argued, the main purpose of “the novel’s other characters” was to observe Mrs. Dalloway’s world (96). This argument is particularly true for Peter Walsh, who spends much of his time dissecting Clarissa’s character. She is a major focus of his observation, although his gaze is not exclusively fixed upon her.

Woolf’s characters exhibit a level of awareness concerning the importance of observation consistent with this narrative intent. For example, Rezia is cognizant of the observer status of strangers and the threat these observers pose to her happiness. “People must

notice; people must see” (Woolf 15). Rezia’s concern is based upon her understanding of observation as an essential data collection strategy. She fears the humiliation that would accompany the public’s knowledge of her husband’s outbursts.

Septimus Warren Smith appears to share his wife’s apprehension about the act of observation but he is primarily concerned with his own questionable status as an observer. Early in the novel, his role as observer is temporarily broken by incidents that threaten a break in the rapport between narrator and reader. For example, when he observes the early car incident, Smith offers an image of how his own death would obscure his observation of the world. “The world wavered and quivered and threatened to burst into flames” (Woolf 15). Within this sentence, Smith is considering the possibility of his own death in fire. However, for the reader, the death of Septimus by fire is the equivalent of the death of his fictional world. Any threat to Septimus poses a threat to the reader’s insight into the fictional world offered by his observations. The character’s death would mean that the reader would be deprived of his unique perspective.

Later, Septimus foreshadows the impact of his suicide when he closes his eyes. He “would shut his eyes; he would see no more” (Woolf 22). Woolf calls attention to the constraints of observation by allowing Smith’s senses to be temporarily blocked. When Septimus closes his eyes, the narrative abruptly ends. The paragraph is over. The reader sees blank space. If Septimus did not open his eyes, the narrative could not continue without shifting to another observer. However, instead, Septimus does open his eyes. Gazing through the eyes of Septimus Smith, the reader can return to the enjoyment of the narrative through Woolf’s continued use of free indirect discourse. The next paragraph begins with an explosion of sensory images and sounds. The leaves and trees beckon. Children laugh. Septimus observes and the fictional world continues.

The application of the anthropic principle highlights the narrative significance of Smith’s suicide. Readers gain insight into the insane mind’s view of the fictional world through his narrative. They lose that connection when he dies. His death resonates, not

simply as a tragic component of the plot, but as a chaotic disruption of the text's free indirect discourse. The suicide means that readers will never again inhabit the mind of Septimus, know his thoughts, or share in his experience.

Unlike Septimus, observation appears to come naturally to Clarissa. The perfect hostess enjoys watching others. The parties she famously organizes provide her with the chance to observe the actions of her guests. She is most comfortable standing at the top of the stairs watching them, rather than interacting with them. At the pivotal moment of the novel where she reflects upon the suicide of Septimus, Clarissa finds comfort in observation: "It was fascinating to watch her... to watch that old woman... going to bed alone" (Woolf 181). When faced with an emotional revelation, Clarissa returns to what she does best: she observes.

The anthropic principle also reveals the existence of observer selection bias, which must be considered when evaluating the content of any observation. Carter initially advanced the anthropic principle as an explanation for the apparent fine-tuning of the universe for human life (Bostrom 44). The fine-tuning argument suggests that the universe's development of conditions that support human life was so improbable that the likelihood was effectively zero. As a result, the universe's development of such conditions had to be directed, or fine-tuned, by some supernatural force, such as a deity. However, the anthropic principle undermines this reasoning by revealing the presence of observer selection bias. Human beings can only act as observers within universes that support their existence. If the universe did not support their existence, they would not exist to observe it. Rather than treat the probability of human existence as low, and thus requiring some explanation through fine-tuning or another supernatural explanation, the anthropic principle points out that the conditional probability of human existence in universes we are observing is very high.

Fictional characters, like real people, are subject to observer selection bias. Critics implicitly acknowledge this possibility when they speak of unreliable narrators. However, the anthropic principle guides the critic to recognize the influence of observer selection

bias within the novel's narrative. This particular critical utility is revealed by the conflicting accounts of the probability of Clarissa's marriage to Richard. Richard Dalloway asserts that his marriage to Clarissa was a miracle (Woolf 113-14). Since Dalloway was likely an atheist like his wife, his repeated use of the term "miracle" does not literally imply the character's belief in the supernatural intervention of a higher power as the cause of his marriage. Rather, Richard is reflecting upon his view of the odds. To his mind, the likelihood of marrying Clarissa was very low, so low that it was nearly impossible and it therefore appeared to him to be a miracle. However, Peter Walsh offers a very different view of the likelihood of the Dalloway marriage. As he watches Clarissa introduce Dalloway to their friends, Peter sees the inevitability of their marriage as "an obvious thing" (Woolf 61). Once the realization struck him, Peter's opinion would not change and his prediction would eventually be proven correct. To Peter's mind, the likelihood of their marriage was absolute, in direct contrast to Richard's view that it was a miracle.

Richard Dalloway's observation about the improbability of his marriage to Clarissa provides the novel's most identifiable application of observer selection bias, the phenomenon that Carter sought to address through his development of the anthropic principle. Dalloway is so fixated upon his own position that he failed to recognize their compatibility. Like the observer gazing at what appeared to be a finely-tuned universe designed for human beings, Dalloway failed to recognize that the odds of his marriage were not very low, but very high, very nearly approaching absolute certainty. If they had not married, Dalloway could not have made such an observation.

A final insight into the novel provided by the anthropic principle is the critical recognition of possible worlds during the decision-making process. As Barrow and Tipler explain, the anthropic principle "must unavoidably recognize the existence of a whole class of real 'other worlds' from which ours is selected by an optimizing principle" (22). Possible worlds theory is not itself new to the field of literary criticism. Lubomir Dolezel argues that fictional worlds are merely possible worlds created by language through

the performative authority assigned to an author by cultural and literary conventions. Fictional worlds exist autonomously within a fictional universe that may include many possible worlds beyond the actual fictional world experienced by the fictional characters. What Dolezel's analysis lacks is an emphasis upon the status of the fictional observer as the mechanism for connecting the real reader to the fictional world. The anthropic principle provides this link, enabling fictional characters to engage in modal realism just as real persons do.

Clarissa Dalloway frequently engages in modal realism by considering likely alternative worlds. For example, Clarissa acknowledges a possible world in which she loved Miss Kilman: "For no doubt with another throw of the dice, had the black been uppermost and not the white, she would have loved Miss Kilman! But not in this world. No" (Woolf 12). Clarissa acknowledges the likely existence of a possible world in which she did not hate her daughter's teacher. However, the Clarissa character presented to the reader within the novel does not exist within that possible fictional world. Instead, she exists in a fictional world where hatred is the reality.

Later, Clarissa daydreams of the possibility of leading "an alternative life" (Bell 96). Within that possible world, Clarissa is a very different entity. She has a different body. She has intellectual abilities and interests, such as an enthusiasm for politics, which are very different from her actual self.

Clarissa also employs modal realism to evaluate her marriage decision. She imagines the possible world in which she chose Peter over Richard: "If I had married him, this gaiety would have been mine all day" (Woolf 46). While she momentarily exults in the idea of running off with the man, Clarissa also grounds her ultimate rejection of his marriage proposal in modal realism. Clarissa knows that she made the right choice because she compares the possible fictional world in which she chose Peter to the actual fictional world in which she chose Richard, observing both mentally and concluding that the world with Richard was the happier one. Peter would have demanded too much while Richard offered the

independence that Clarissa desired. Clarissa's reliance upon modal realism to support her choice illustrates how fictional characters may emulate the decision-making activities of real persons by evaluating their own possible worlds.

In conclusion, the application of the anthropic principle to Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* provides considerable grist for the critical mill. Through Septimus, Woolf explored the narrative consequences of the loss of an observer. His suicide is rendered more tragic for the reader with the realization that his fictional death silences his unique narrative voice. Furthermore, the anthropic principle helps the reader to identify the observer selection bias error made by Richard. Richard makes the common observation error of misunderstanding the odds. Finally, Clarissa's reflection upon alternative world scenarios illustrates the utility of possible worlds theory for decision-making. Modal realism encourages the construction of possible worlds in order to evaluate different scenarios before choosing the best recourse.

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Screw-turn-izing the Governess's Touching Story: Pedophilia in Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*

| Joseph Carroll

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I used to wonder how my little charges could help guessing I thought strange things about them.
—The Governess (51).

Since its publication in 1898, Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* has been the subject of a large, meticulous, and seemingly exhaustive body of criticism. However, as noted by nearly all of the novel's critics,¹ despite this "surplus of criticism" which, according to Jenn McCollum "is enough to turn even the most creative contemporary critics away," nearly all criticism on the novel which aims to "unearth a coherent plot" can be accurately divided into two distinct groups: apparitionists and hallucinationists (39). Apparitionists, such as Allan Lloyd Smith, Mark Jones, Ellis Hanson, Thomas J. Bontly, Malcom Pittock, and V.P. Singh, maintain that the ghosts of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel truly exist, exert real influence over characters of the novel, and serve as the primary catalyst behind the mysterious incidents at Bly. Hallucinationists, such as Edmund Wilson and Helen Killoran (13), argue that the ghosts and any seemingly supernatural happenings at

Bly are merely hallucinations of the Governess, likely caused by the Governess' expressed sexual feelings for the children's uncle. Yet, Christine Butterworth-McDermott, in her recent article "James's Fractured Fairy-Tale: How the Governess Gets Grimm," exposes the faulty presumption of the existence of only two viable interpretive theories on the novel's plot. Broadening the interpretive possibilities of *The Turn of the Screw*, Butterworth-McDermott argues that "the apparitions are neither real nor hallucinations... they are literary contrivances designed *willfully* and *consciously* by the Governess to manipulate the reader" and earn the approval of the children's uncle (43). By effectively demonstrating the existence of a third, alternative interpretation outside of the typical apparitionist and hallucinationist theories, Butterworth-McDermott's analysis frees the text for numerous other readings of the novel devoid of real ghosts or hallucinations. While readers might be "swayed by the ghost plot," a careful rereading "between the lines" of the text reveals the "eventual, hidden meaning" of *The Turn of the Screw* (Butterworth-McDermott 55).

Though I risk falling into the trap of the novel (Hanson 372),² in agreement with Butterworth-McDermott's assertion that the Governess intentionally seeks to deceive, this essay argues that the Governess can be reasonably read as a child molester who hopes to either conceal her abuse of the children with her deceptive manuscript or convince herself that she did not commit such atrocities. In providing this disturbing interpretive possibility, I show that James's psychological thriller locates evil neither in the paranormal nor in the corruptibility of innocence but in the tangible, dreadful reality of deviant human behavior and adult perversions.

Douglass, who describes the Governess as "charming," "agreeable," "clever," and "nice" and reads the manuscript as if it is the undeniable truth, is clearly fooled by the Governess's disturbingly creative, complex, and convincing cover story, careful negotiation of the Governess's narration reveals her hidden sexual abuse of the children (James 2). From the very beginning, the

Governess glimpses a perfect opportunity for her debauchery at Bly in her “castle of romance” (James 12). After learning that Miles and Flora’s parents are dead and their only surviving relative, the Uncle, has practically no interaction with the children and wants everyone to always “let him alone,” the Governess immediately feels “disburdened, delighted” (James 6). Furthermore, as Douglas confirms to his rapt audience, the Governess “saw [the Uncle] only twice” and both meetings were strictly professional job interviews. If, as Butterworth-McDermott and other critics suggest, the Governess was romantically or, at least, sexually interested in the Uncle (44), she would certainly not be pleased when he told her to “never, never: neither appeal nor complain nor write about anything” to him (James 6).

Quite to the contrary, having the futility of her alleged dream romance being blatantly rubbed in her face, the Governess would be disappointed by her lack of interaction with the Uncle and feel considerably less enthusiastic about taking the job at Bly in a rural setting with only servants and children. In fact, an unnamed lady listening to Douglas read the unnamed Governess’s manuscript, who assumes that this story will involve a romance between the Governess and the Uncle, expresses the dejected, heartbroken sentiment which the Governess would have experienced had she truly been interested in the Uncle. Upon hearing that “[the Governess] never saw [the Uncle] again,” this lady, who had previously been enthralled by Douglas’s preface to the Governess’s story and had been eagerly asking questions, is suddenly abrupt and disenchanted, only dishearteningly uttering a deflated “OH!” (James 6). Moreover, as Butterworth-McDermott notes, the Governess and the Uncle are separated by the “impossible division of class that only fairy tales can get over” (54), making any potential romance between them obviously impossible. Consequently, the Governess’s behavior in the novel contradicts theories, such as Butterworth-McDermott’s argument, which claim the motivation behind the Governess’s invention of the ghosts is to impress the Uncle, to reframe the Uncle’s personality for the reader and herself, or to cope with the repression of her sexual attraction to the Uncle.

Unfortunately, as her sexual desires are aimed at the children instead of the Uncle, the Governess “already felt rewarded” because she saw her plan perfectly falling into place (James 6). The Governess only becomes more pleased when she discovers that, beyond the illiterate and seemingly credulous Mrs. Grose, the other servants scarcely have any interaction with the children and have even less communication and credibility with the Uncle and the world outside of Bly than Mrs. Grose (James 13, 65). Furthermore, as the Governess’s narration emphasizes through testimony by Mrs. Grose and the alleged existence of the ghosts, Miss Jessel and Peter Quint—both of the previous caretakers of the children—are dead (James 6, 36). Therefore, the Governess also does not need to worry about visits or inquiry by previous caretakers of the children exposing her abuse or questioning her absolute authority. Revealing her perception of complete sovereignty over this painfully opportune situation for her evil devices, following her introduction to Mrs. Grose and her first night at Bly, the Governess emphatically narrates, “I was, strangely at the helm!” of this “*convenient* house” (emphasis added, James 12).

While the Governess effectively hides her evil designs from Douglass and the reader, she cannot totally conceal her disturbing pedophilic thoughts, which are revealed in her diction. As Jenn McCollum elucidates, despite the Governess’s attempts to convince the readers that she is scared of the alleged ghosts, “we cannot help but feel her excitement. Her narrative language builds a rollercoaster of emotion, but the governess always seems excited about where it will go next—not anxious or scared” (50). Moreover, the Governess immediately dubs Flora “the most beautiful child I had ever seen,” admitting that she is “too much excited upon seeing her” before the Governess even talks to Flora (James 9). Exploiting the language of the Romantic child, the Governess’s hyperbolic terms of endearment, such as “beatific,” “radiant,” “divine,” “Raphael’s holy infants,” “cherubs” are rendered weird (James 9, 10, 17, 24). Beyond revealing her sick attraction to the children, this portrayal of the children as perfect beings that inspire a “sort of passion of tenderness” is the Governess’s attempt to soothe her conscience and

convince herself that the children are undamaged and even enjoy what she is doing to them (James 17). Moreover, demonstrating how effectively she conceals her sexual thoughts and actions, the Governess carefully uses the language of divinity, beauty, and light to cleverly mask her true deviant thoughts with seemingly innocent, yet still eerily suggestive word choice. Additionally, not only does the Governess reveal immense sexual desires for Miles and Flora, she even converts her dreadful desires into action. Using her deceptive narrative, the Governess hides all of the most explicit instances of direct sexual abuse; however, implicit scenes of actual child molestation are disturbingly present in the book with minimal need for inferences.³ For example, Helen Killoran, after pointing out the sexual implications of the Governess forcing Flora to sleep in the Governess's bed, writes, "When [the Governess] turns and realizes that Flora is out of bed, her nearly orgasmic reaction must have frightened, even hurt, Flora: 'I must have gripped my little girl with a spasm'" (20). Sami Ludwig's essay, "Metaphors, Cognition, and Behavior: The Reality of Sexual Puns in *The Turn of the Screw*," argues that not only do the innumerable innuendos, puns, and the ambiguous language in the novel conclusively hint at the literal enactment of sex but that the novel "make[s] the most sense when literal sex is read into the plot" (qtd. in McCollum 46). Furthermore, McCollum contends that, for James, "not having his characters speak directly about sex...reveals the sexual nature of their interactions" because James's palpable allusions to the "unnamable act" of sex by the unnamed Governess are best articulated by intentional avoidance (49). Therefore, despite the Governess's attempts to entirely conceal the enactment of her deviant thoughts, she converts her sexual urges for the children into abuse.

The Governess's primary objective within the narrative and in writing down her story reveals that her great fear is other adults' realization of her secret abuse of the children. Any outside influence or force which threatens to shatter the isolation of Bly and her unquestioned control and dominion must be immediately extinguished to avoid jeopardizing her perfect situation at the

“convenient house,” exposing her unspeakable acts, and incurring personal and professional consequences (James 12). For example, rather than being afraid to disappoint the Uncle by sending him a letter for help, the Governess wants to hide the truth from him. She freaks out at Miles at the church and explodes when Mrs. Grose suggests writing the Uncle for help (James 65, 75). In regard to the Governess’s obsession with hiding Miles’s expulsion from school, she is certainly not afraid he is corrupted, as she knows “he couldn’t play any longer at innocence” because she stole his innocence (James 60). Alternatively, she fears that adults at Miles’s school or his friends will try to contact him or vice versa, leading to the exposure of her child molestation. Rather than being motivated by her personal “moral panic” as Ellis Hanson argues (373), the Governess is motivated by her fear of society’s moral panic and the repercussions she will face if society’s moral panic is triggered when someone discovers her secret pedophilia.

But, why invent the ghosts? And, why record the story? First, the Governess thinks the ghost story is a good excuse to deceive Mrs. Grose and the other servants to explain the strange things going on in the house. The Governess thinks the ghosts will justify how strangely close and controlling she is of the children and explain anything untoward the children might say because they could have been molested, deceived, or possessed by the ghosts. Second, by tarnishing the reputations of Quint and Miss Jessel—who the text provides no concrete evidence did anything sexual or inappropriate with the children—and casting them as evil ghosts, the Governess could blame the children’s previous supervisors if the children ever mention sexual abuse to anyone.⁴ This deflection of guilt upon Quint and Miss Jessel is especially clever and effective because, as both of these previous caretakers are dead, they cannot defend themselves against the Governess’s unsubstantiated accusations. Interestingly, even under the apparitionists’ assumption that they are real, the novel never provides any evidence that they harm the children. The ghosts actually appear to be quite innocuous; the Governess—not the alleged ghosts—damages and manipulates the

children. In agreement, Hanson, an apparitionist, observing that the ghosts never actually “beckon, invite, or solicit the children or coax them into physical danger,” confirms: “To me, the ghosts, whatever fear or gossip they incite, seem rather sweetly melancholic and romantic, revisiting their old haunts, peering in windows, weeping” (377). Lastly, Thomas J. Bontly, another apparitionist, argues that the alleged ghosts possess no apparently sexual connotations, rather, it is the Governess who imposes sexuality upon the ghosts and “it is she herself who fawns over [the children], kisses them and caresses them and seeks to possess them both emotionally and physically” (730). Therefore, upon careful analysis of the Governess’s deceptive manuscript, her attempt to shift blame onto either the real Quint and Miss Jessel or their alleged ghosts both fail, placing the culpability for the children’s abuse firmly and exclusively on her own shoulders.

Yet, as the novel progresses, Miles’s actions seem to get more and more suspicious, as if he is playing along with and even enjoying the Governess’s treatment.⁵ However, Miles, who has exposure to the outside world at school and who Butterworth-McDermott deems “an exceptionally intelligent child” (52), suspects that the Governess’s treatment is improper and Miles is actually trying to protect his sister. By distracting the Governess by playing the piano (James 87), Miles sets up a situation in which the Governess and Mrs. Grose would both desperately look for the missing Flora. After Mrs. Grose sees through the Governess’s ghost ruse and witnesses Flora’s immense, uncontainable fear at the sight of the Governess (James 98), the Governess realizes her masquerade has run its course. Mrs. Grose, suspecting something evil is afoot, will soon pursue outside help. In response, the Governess sends away Flora with Mrs. Grose—the one person who can protect Miles (James 100). The Governess, at this point delusionally convinced that Miles erotically or romantically loves her because of Miles’s endearing remarks to her and his supposed sexual allusions—“Oh, you know what a boy wants!” (James 85)—makes a last ditch effort to permanently establish her control and win over Miles’s affection.

Thus, the Governess arranges what she portrays as a young couple's wedding feast and even announces, "Well—so we're alone!" (James 107). However, when she realizes Miles does not believe her ghost stories, she concludes that he has rejected her love. Despite the Governess's attempts to construe Miles's last words as a declaration that the nonexistent ghost of Quint is the devil, Miles actually calls the Governess the devil, and, in response, she suffocates him in anger over his rejection of her love and to eliminate all of the evidence of her crimes.⁶ Therefore, despite the Governess's attempts in her manuscript to assign guilt and corruption to Miles by emphasizing his alleged relationship with Quint, his expulsion from school, and his alleged flirtatious behavior with her, Miles is not complicit in the Governess's molestation and even sacrifices himself to save Flora.

Following Miles's murder and the end of the novel, a return to the introduction with Douglas further implicates the Governess and deepens her wickedness. The authorship of the manuscript that Douglas possesses and shares with others allows her to escape all ramifications of her actions without harm. The Governess writes this story not only to convince herself she did nothing wrong with the children but also to convince future employers, like Douglas's sister, that she is a safe, devoted governess who did everything she could to protect Miles and Flora from spectral predators. Thus, in an extension of the horror beyond the literal text of the novel itself, the Governess's manuscript allows her to continue her abuse of children and keep thinking "strange things" about her "little charges" (James 51).⁷ As Douglas explains, the "dreadfulness" and sheer terror of the story is "beyond everything" because the horror continues even after the story, as reconstructed in the Governess's manuscript, ends (James 1).

Yet, given this new interpretation of *The Turn of the Screw* as the horrifying tale of an unrestrained pedophile abusing children and covering her tracks with an intricate ghost story, why would James write such a story? As one of the audience member asks Douglas,

“For sheer terror?” (James 1). Certainly, this interpretation of the novel does provide ample terror and horror. However, by writing this story such that this interpretation is viable, James also makes two major criticisms of his society.

First, James critiques the societal tendency to explain mysterious or confusing events by attributing them to paranormal or non-rational sources. By locating the evil and horror of the novel in reality and in humanity—not in the imaginary or supernatural, James demonstrates the importance of using reason and careful observation to find evil. The novel highlights people’s fascination with fantastical, impossible stories and their propensity to accept these fabricated stories over the very tangible, real horrors right in front of their eyes. Just as Mrs. Grose, the servants, and most readers of this novel fail to see the Governess’s molestation of the children behind her phantasmal cover story, James’s society often ignores rational explanations to horrible events in favor of more appealing fictional alternatives. James wants his readers to lift the veil covering their eyes and to see reality. James further emphasizes this social commentary with his framing device at the beginning of the novel. James’s sardonic characterization of Douglas and the audience listening to the Governess’s story subtly mocks people’s obsession with, appeal to, and willingness to accept clearly fictional horror stories as historical fact.

Second, James criticizes his contemporary upper-class society’s methods of childrearing. The novel features a commonplace occurrence of James’s time in which children’s upper-class parents or guardians delegate the feeding, raising, and teaching of their children to paid employees. However, in many cases, such as the instance in *The Turn of the Screw*, these nannies, governesses, tutors, and other servants are given uncontested control of the children with little or no supervision by the children’s parents or guardians. Analyzing this large scale social criticism through a Marxist hermeneutic, Killoran argues that the upper classes “are corrupting their servants [and] then handing their neglected children over to them,” creating an “unending cycle of immoral influences” (23). Thus, if these “corrupted” hired caretakers are either incapable

of properly raising children or possess some degree of malicious intent, nothing hinders them from freely damaging the children without fear of detection. This novel presents an extreme example of a horrific, injurious caretaker with the Governess, but, even in less extreme cases with merely unaffectionate or disgruntled servants “who can rarely replace a parent” (Killoran 23), these parentally neglected children are not given proper love and education and feel isolated and inferior due to their lack of interaction with their true parents.

While many other interpretations of the novel are certainly viable, James’s use of sexualized language and innuendos and his ambiguity in the construction of the novel’s plot allow this disturbing interpretation of the Governess as a pedophile to be a plausible and fruitful understanding of the text. Through this horrifying tale of an unrepentant child molester, James provides both subtle social commentary on people’s foolish preference for supernatural explanations to natural phenomena and the risks of the detached, hands-off parenting practiced by the upper-class members of society. However, given the almost universal revulsion, horror, and sheer dread experienced by people throughout history about incidences of child molestation,⁸ by giving another turn of the screw beyond the “two turns” of Douglas’s story of two children being haunted, James’s representation of the Governess as a pedophile and sexual abuser of Miles and Flora allows James to keep his promise of a shockingly terrifying story that goes “beyond everything” in “dreadfulness” (James 1).

Notes

1. Some critics who specifically acknowledge the existence of these two major interpretations are Bontly (721), Butterworth-McDermott (43), Killoran (13), McCollum (39), Pittock (332), Singh (53), and Smith (139).

2. Ellis Hanson, referencing other works by James, including *What Maisie Knew*, “The Pupil,” and a letter, argues that the intentional

ambiguity of the novel acts as a trap, revealing more about the reader's psychology than James's mindset (372). Shoshana Felman, a psychoanalytic critic, notes that the text is "especially a trap for the Freudian reader" because it incites conscious and unconscious paranoia and suspicions" (qtd. in Hanson 372).

3. From a psychological perspective, the Governess also qualifies as a child molester and pedophile. Jenn McCollum, in her essay "The Romance of Henry James's Female Pedophile," argues that the Governess meets the official definition of a pedophile as established by the American Psychiatric Association. McCollum writes, "James's governess meets all the characteristics for the [Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders'] description of pedophilia" because she has "recurrent, intense, sexually-arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviors that generally involve children" (46, 41). While McCollum strangely and unconvincingly seems to argue that pedophilia, especially female pedophilia, is improperly stigmatized by modern society and that Miles willingly participates in the Governess's sexual advances, McCollum provides useful insights into the psychological community's understanding of pedophilia and observes that other critics, despite glazing over the pedophilia in the novel or still adhering to apparitionist or hallucinationist theories, also recognize the Governess's desire for child sex (46).

4. Agreeing with both of these explanations of the Governess's reasons for creating the ghosts, Butterworth-McDermott writes, "The ghosts are then a mere fictional tactic on the part of the governess to vilify the children and justify the deadly lengths she went to. In her mind, if the ghosts are convincing enough, Douglas—or any other "prince" of a reader for that matter—is not likely to blame her for torturing two innocent children" (55).

5. McCollum even claims that the novel should be seen as "a romance between the governess and Miles" (46). McCollum furthers insists: "Miles does not die at the end of the action at Bly but rather he lives on, continuing to experience sexual pleasure with his

governess and, after marrying her, continues to relish the moments of scandalous equivocation that their romance is dependent upon” (47).

6. One of the most disturbing parts of the novel is the Governess’s overly sexualized, passionate language while crushing and killing Miles. After kissing Miles and using terms such as “infatuated,” “unspeakable anxiety,” “breathing hard,” and “climax,” the Governess “grasp[s]” Miles to her breast, and she narrates: “I caught him, yes, I held him—it may be imagined with what a passion...We were alone with the quiet day, and his little heart, dispossessed, had stopped” (James 115-7). Her infusion of sexual innuendos with her deathly embrace of Miles such that she could immediately determine when his heart stopped beating not only indicates the intentionality of her murder but also her sexual attraction to Miles. Commenting on this scene, McCollum writes, “A story that begins with the callow governess on a ‘see-saw’ of ‘the right throbs and the wrong’ finishes with the ripe ejaculation of a job well done. The sexually-naïve governess transforms, by the end, into a woman who has discovered the right jerks and stroke to make Miles utter “the cry of a creature hurled over an abyss” (48).

7. As noted by McCollum, readers “expect the governess to show shame, as a regular sex offender would” (51). However, feeling guilt would suggest that the Governess “acknowledges the wrongness of her desires,” which she certainly does not (51). Thus, as the Governess fails to see her molestation of the children as a moral wrong, she happily uses her manuscript as a tool to realize her pedophilic desires in the future.

8. McCollum offers an in-depth analysis of the historical abhorrence and panic experienced by people throughout history in response to child molestation and pedophilia. In particular, McCollum addresses the greatly increased societal horror in response to female pedophilia like the child abuse practiced by the Governess (40). In their psychological study of female pedophilia in 2002, psychologists

Eva Chow and Alberto L. Choy found that most people in modernity consider female pedophilia to be the “most perverse act against nature” (qtd. in McCollum 43). However, as the Governess assumes a mother-role, her pedophilia is yet another turn of the screw, increasing the horror even further. McCollum argues that the American legal system and public reactions to Toni Morrison’s flawed, sometimes murderous mother-figures demonstrate that the perversion of the societal assumption that all mothers are always nurturing caretakers is one of the most uncomfortable, traumatizing, and terrorizing concepts for the general populace (43-44). Thus, the existence of female pedophilia by the mother-figure of the Governess drastically increases the overall horror and dreadfulness of the novel.

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Transcending Language in Gilman's *Herland*

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Language permeates the theme and delivery of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*, serving as both a system that contains and a tool that empowers the writer/reader. Ferdinand de Saussure, the founder of structural linguistics, proposes that language is made up of the "signified" (the concept) and the "signifier" (the "sound-image") and asserts that the relationship between the two is arbitrary (Saussure 67). In response to structuralism, deconstructionist Jacques Derrida exposes that "structure—or rather the structurality of structure—although it has always been at work, has always been neutralized or reduced, and this by a process of giving it a center or of referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin" ("Structure, Sign, and Play" 278). In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida refers to this center as "logos" and responds to the logocentrism of Western structures—particularly language systems (10). Gilman demonstrates that which Derrida articulates: language and culture are inseparable, one being indicative of the qualities of the other. The signified that transcends a particular language system and serves as the point of reference—the ultimate "truth," the logos—for all other signifieds reveals the "truth" on which the corresponding culture centers. By centering on the logos, the language system reinforces the values of its corresponding culture as its users take what is spoken for granted. While Gilman reveals logocentric language systems as oppressive, she demonstrates that these same languages may also liberate the reader. Gilman does not have to use a different language to liberate

the reader from the language system; she uses English throughout the text. The shift of the language's center—the logos—offers the reader an alternative perspective on the contemporary local English and language systems as a whole. By juxtaposing the male characters' language system and culture with that of the Herlanders, the text exposes the early twentieth-century United States English language as androcentric and colonialist. Although Gilman does not invent a new language for *Herland*, the text implies a conversely gynocentric and egalitarian language and culture centered on the ideal of Motherhood. In replacing patriarchy and colonialism with Motherhood and egalitarianism, *Herland* inverts the logos upon which the language of Gilman's "now" centers in order to invite the reader to transcend her language system and culture.

The language of the three male characters illustrates early twentieth-century United States culture and reveals it as androcentric and colonialist. In a logocentric language system, these two values reveal the favoring of one binary opposition over the other: masculinity/femininity and civilized/savage. Although the American reader initially identifies with the males' culture and language, she may feel increasingly distant from the male characters as Gilman exposes the culture and language system as oppressive. For example, when Zava inquires about the meaning of the term "virgin," Jeff replies that the term applies to "the female who has not mated" (47). Jeff and the male characters' oversight of the fact that "virgin" may also refer to a male reveals the United States culture as one that does not consider male virginity important but focuses primarily on female virginity (47). The male characters find female virginity desirable because the culture values "discovering" anything that is "undiscovered." Because United States culture also privileges "doing" or "active" in a doing/being or active/passive binary, the male is thus privileged as a discoverer over the female as a discoverable being. The virginity or lack thereof in males is inconsequential because the males are the active beings—the colonizers, the controllers of female virginity—while the females in the androcentric culture are passive, like a section of land. Male virginity has no effect on the male's ability to colonize, but female

virginity determines female ability to *be* colonized. Therefore, the early twentieth-century United States culture values a female according to the status of her virginity. Because of the United States ideal of the masculine pioneer spirit, it is essential to the act of “discovering” that society perceive the female as undiscovered just as it perceived the “western frontier” as undiscovered. The suggestion of the undiscovered in the word “virgin” associates the word with a passive being, which is why the culture of the male characters does not assign this word to males. In reinforcing the culture’s perception of male as active and female as passive, the twentieth-century United States language system’s use of the word “virgin” as exclusively female oppresses the subordinate part of the binary—female—by establishing male as the ideal in the language user’s mind.

Similar to the parallel of active/passive with masculinity/femininity in the twentieth-century United States English language system and culture, Gilman exposes a parallel of active/passive and civilized/savage. This does not necessarily suggest that the culture expects the “savages” to act passively, rather, it views a “savage” person as one that is naturally to be subdued by a “civilized” people. Gilman reveals that the male characters’ culture takes pride in exploring and colonizing “virgin” lands and cultures: “[Terry’s] great aim was exploration. He used to make all kinds of a row because there was nothing left to explore now, only patchwork and filling in, he said” (3). Once the males learn of Herland, Terry insists, “This is our find” (7). However, it is not only Terry who possesses the colonial spirit. The narrator, Van, portrays the colonial spirit as a common masculine value: “There was something attractive to a bunch of unattached young men in finding an undiscovered country of a strictly Amazonian nature” (7). Indeed, Van’s use of language—such as the term “savages” for members of cultures that he and the males determine “uncivilized” according to their standards—reflects his deep roots in a colonial culture. Corresponding with the active role assigned to males in androcentric culture, the male characters assign the active role to “civilized” cultures. After discovering the skillfully woven cloth, one of the male characters declares that “[t] here couldn’t be such a place—and not known about,” expressing the

belief that the “savage” people’s knowledge of Herland is irrelevant (7). Just as androcentric terms establish the male as the ideal in the user’s mind, colonialist terms like “savage”—with its suggestion of a culture that should be subdued by “civilized” culture and thus rendered passive—reinforces the subordination of all peoples that the language users view as not conforming to the ideal of “civilized.”

Because Herland culture and language center on the transcendental Motherhood, Herlander is gynocentric—an inversion of United States English. Sixty years before “Laugh of the Medusa,” Gilman fulfills Hélène Cixous’ exhortation to all female writers that “woman must write woman” (Cixous 877). The capitalization of the word “Mother” and “Motherhood” suggests an inverse of the Christian God as “Father” that prevails in the culture of the male characters and the twentieth-century United States reader. Van observes that the Herlanders “were Mothers, not in our sense of helpless involuntary fecundity...but in the sense of Conscious Makers of People” (69). The use of the term “fecundity” supports the androcentric association of the female body with land. In contrast to the passivity assigned to females and female sexuality in the androcentric culture, the gynocentric Herlander language system assigns an active role to mothers—evident in the use of the words “Conscious Makers” (69). Furthermore, the use of capitalization in the latter part of the quote that compares motherhoods reflects a view of the mothers as partners in the deified “Human Motherhood” (67). Thus, the Herlander language system and culture values femininity as the ideal. In his ignorance of the possibility of femininity as ideal, Terry assumes that upon entering Herland he will “get [him]self elected King [of Herland] in no time” (10). Because of his indoctrination with an androcentric language system and culture, he perceives the male as naturally superior in the male/female binary. As a result, he expects that even in the absence of males, masculinity will remain as an ideal in a culture of only females. The reader may assume that the reason a male/female binary does not exist in Herland is a lack of an idea of “male” to which “female” may be subordinate. However, the Herlanders are aware of the historical existence of males in their society and still

choose not to regard this memory of male as ideal. His assumptions are an example of the overwhelming influence of the language system on the beliefs of the individual, an illustration that allows the text to assert the existence and subjectivity of the logoi.

Just as Herlanders demonstrate the inverse of United States androcentrism, they also demonstrate the inverse of colonialism in their language and culture. As Zava explains Herlander history and comes to “a time when they were confronted with the problem of ‘the Pure of population,’” she makes a point to explain that the Herlanders did not “start off on predatory excursions to get more land from somebody else, or to get more food from somebody else, to maintain their struggling mass” (69). Although Gilman filters this passage through the narrator, Van, the ideas reflect Zava’s account of Herlander history. Zava’s comparison of the colonialist spirit with predatory instinct suggests that Herlander culture views colonialism as destructive to the colonized people group rather than an improvement on that people group. Their language as portrayed in the text lacks colonialist language, which would subordinate one or more groups of people by assigning terms like “savage.” Conversely to the United States citizens, Herlanders are eager to learn from outside cultures and initially assume that any “bi-sexual” culture is superior because of the cultural richness that Herlanders assume this quality will provide (56). The Herlander history illustrates a culture whose values are directly opposite the males’ United States culture. This does not suggest a logoi of savage/civilized because the very terms “savage” and “civilized” indicate a colonialist point of view. Instead, the Herlanders demonstrate a passive/active binary with “passive” as privileged regarding the interrelations of cultures. Gilman’s suggestion that the Herlanders are puzzled by United States androcentrism and colonialism demonstrates that the Herlander language system, being thus inverted in relation to the male characters’ language system, simultaneously reflects and shapes Herlanders’ cultural values.

Despite its critique of twentieth-century American logoi, the text does not escape logocentrism. Rather, it inverts the center of English, providing the reader an opportunity to reconsider her

understanding of language and, ultimately, reality. Toward the end of the novel, Van explicitly recognizes the inversion in the language systems. He reflects on the opposite connotations that the words *male* and *female* assume between the two cultures that center on opposite logoi:

When we say men, man, manly, manhood, and all the other masculine derivatives, we have in the background of our minds a huge vague crowded picture of the world and all its activities... And when we say Women, we think Female—the sex. (135)

Van contrasts this androcentric language system with that of the Herlanders, claiming that, to them, “the word *woman* called up all that big background...and the word *man* meant to them only *male*—the sex” (135). The text’s language remains the same—English, and the signifiers are the same—“woman” and “man.” The difference [Derrida’s *différance*] is in meaning and connotation. Thus, the attentive reader discovers that such seemingly static definitions of *masculinity* and *femininity* depend on culture and vary according to each culture’s central logos. The reader may then apply this principle to all signifiers and consequently understand that language is an arbitrary system of signs. Therefore, the text dislodges the attentive reader from her comfortable perception that language and truth are absolute and static, rather than dynamic and culturally shaped systems. The result is a reader whose thoughts now transcend her language system, even though she may remain monolingual (or whatever she was before). She must now question her preconceptions because of her awareness of the logos that affects her idea of Truth at the most basic level. Her transcendence has equipped her to weave her thoughts in and out of language systems and cultures, searching, analyzing, and questioning the existence of Truth.

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Reconceiving Morality in *Dorian Gray*: An Investigation in Antecedent Genre

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When Oscar Wilde published *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in 1890, he received an onslaught of criticism castigating his work on moral grounds, claiming that it was “a gloating study of the mental and physical corruption of a fresh, fair and golden youth” (Beckson 72). Reviewers in the major newspapers similarly opined that the characters in the novel displayed a distinct relish of their immoral lifestyles and lacked compunction for their deviancy. Indeed, Dorian Gray, the novel’s protagonist, begins as an innocent youth but later surrenders his morals for a lifestyle of depravity. Even after causing ruinous scandals in his personal life and in London aristocracy, he never recants his epicurean philosophy, leading reviewers to consider the text as an endorsement of apostasy.

While the philosophical underpinnings of the text provide a possible explanation for the journalistic condemnation, Vyvyan Holland, Wilde’s son and biographer, contributes a different reason for *Dorian Gray*’s notoriety: “[T]he book did not follow the recognised pattern of the accepted form of fiction...” (70). The novelistic tradition in Victorian England anticipated a moral conclusion to a story, as evidenced in the critics’ sanctimonious reviews. John Halperin explains that the genre of the “Victorian novel,” better known as the morality novel, is meant to show “the

moral and psychological expansion of protagonists who begin in self-absorption and move, through the course of a tortuous ordeal of education, to more complete self-knowledge” (qtd. in Kohl 161). *Dorian Gray* appears to follow the conventions of this genre with the entrance of a pure character, his departure from morality, and a final scene to offer a return to a moral life. However, Wilde violates the expectations of this genre when Dorian spurns this opportunity to repent:

“It is never too late, Dorian. Let us kneel down and try if we cannot remember a prayer. Isn’t there a verse somewhere, ‘Though your sins be as scarlet, yet I will make them as white as snow?’”

“Those words mean nothing to me now.” (*The Picture* 162)

This passage is a stark repudiation of the crucial scene of the morality novel. Wilde introduces an occasion for his character to repent, but Dorian rejects it instead. If we insist on imposing the genre of the morality novel onto the text like Wilde’s audience did, I agree with the critics: *Dorian Gray* is an incomplete morality tale. Yet we can only call it “incomplete” by assuming that it should fit perfectly within the conventions of the genre, and by understanding genre as a formalist concept, we necessarily must. This violation of genre is not a literary innovation, but a flaw. Texts cease to belong to a formalist genre as soon as they stray from expectation. It is clear that, by transgressing the conventions of the morality novel, *Dorian Gray* fails as a member of the genre.

It is a matter of genre, then, that both informs and confounds our understanding of the novel. Although we can impose a genre, like the morality novel, onto the text, we find that a single generic framework ignores elements of the text with which it chafes. As Rachel Bowlby explains, Wilde’s novel exceeds confinement to a single genre: “*Dorian Gray* does not fall straightforwardly into any generic category, and the narrative of a lost soul, sin and eventual repentance is only one of the innumerable different forms and styles contained within it” (21). We are unable to assign *Dorian Gray* to a single genre, because the novel only *participates* in genre. Jacques Derrida contends that all texts “participat[e] in one or

several genres,” but he qualifies that “participation never amounts to belonging” (212). That is, while *Dorian Gray* contains constitutive elements of several genres, it does not fit wholly into a single generic category. In my approach to *Dorian Gray*, I will appropriate the concept of antecedent genres from rhetorical genre theory to investigate the constraint that genre presented both to the author and to his audience. Wilde, in his critical oeuvre, condemns the infiltration of morality into art, but I contend that genre, as a vessel of culture, necessarily and strategically sabotages Wilde’s argument by introducing morality into his text on a metatextual level.

Within rhetorical genre theory, Carolyn Miller provides us with a definition of genre as a “typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations” (qtd. in Devitt 576). The broadening of this definition to literature stipulates that we must expand the boundaries of the rhetorical situation from the site where a rhetorical action occurs to encompass the culture of Wilde’s England, wherein *Dorian Gray* was written and received. Readers’ expectations for texts and writers’ reaction to these expectations codify into genres, thus positioning genre within culture. Genre tempers the audience’s taste, and consequentially, conventionalizes the expectations that act as a model for writers of a genre. Thus, the relationship that genre has between the writer and the audience situates genre within culture and imbues genre with cultural values.

This model of genre strikingly deviates from previous conceptions that informed such scholarship as Virginia Brackett’s “Oscar Wilde’s *Dorian Gray* as Secular Scripture” and Maureen O’Connor’s “Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as Irish National Tale.” These approaches would insist that this text can and should be read as belonging solely to a single, formalist genre in order to unravel its meaning. However, rather than *oppose* my point that *Dorian Gray* does not fit into a single genre, together, by offering different generic frameworks for the text, they *support* that the novel has a multifaceted generic identity. The reduction of a text to a single genre ignores not only the complexity of a work, but the message embroidered within it as well. Using the morality novel, a formalist approach would see Wilde’s departure from the

genre as an attack on literary custom, but our rhetorical approach understands this generic violation as defiance to the values held by Victorian society and instilled into the genre.

As Holland notes, Wilde and his contemporaries wrote in a stringent climate of literary expectations, where literature was tasked to reflect the values of Victorian England:

English Society was encompassed by conventionality: every utterance and every action of the individual were required to conform to rigid rules of behaviour and ethics, the slightest deviation from which being regarded as an outrage.... Even the canons of art and literature were laid down and had to be adhered to. It was this state of affairs that Wilde made it his mission in life to break down.... (5)

Like the morality novel in Victorian England, antecedent genres function as socially codified genres within a culture and inspire the generic identity of subsequent texts. These genres are vessels of culture and, as Kathleen Jamieson shows in her article “Antecedent Genre as Rhetorical Constraint,” are capable of imposing “powerful rhetorical constraints” on both the creation and interpretation of a rhetorical action (407), or in our case, a text. That is, the antecedent genre of the morality novel impresses on its audience a series of known expectations, and Wilde, understanding these conventions, exploits this generic framework in order to craft a message to the culture that sired this genre.

While the constraint from this genre manifests itself on Wilde’s audience and results in the negative critical reaction to the text, Wilde would seem not only to criticize the morality novel but to utilize it as well. Wilde purposefully evokes the morality novel to scorn it and the values encoded within it. In “The Decay of Lying,” Wilde writes of anti-mimesis, a philosophy that he introduces in the preface to *Dorian Gray* and that pervades the rest of the text. He defines this philosophy concisely as “Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life” (“The Decay” 39). The pages of the morality novel serve Victorian England a bandage for its own moral decay, but as Wilde avers, society cannot mirror the probity of art. The morality novel reinforces the ideas of virtue and redemption despite

vice and misery, and by violating this genre, Wilde snubs the false righteousness that the morality novel offers its audience. However, rather than view this violation of genre as an exposure of hypocrisy, Wilde's audience understands it as an introduction of corruption to society. When a reviewer in the *Daily Chronicle* blames Dorian for "defiling English society with the moral pestilence which is incarnate in him" (Beckson 73), we know that the reviewer is not speaking about Dorian but about Wilde himself.

According to Miller's definition, genre is "rhetorical *action*" [emphasis added]. A violation of genre is not a passive quality of a text but an active critique of a rhetorical situation. Yet Wilde's audience, constrained by a static construct of genre, could not see the rhetorical effect of the violation but only the portrayal of society on which the critique relied. In response, Wilde, using his character Lord Henry as his mouthpiece in the revised 1891 edition of the text, taunts, "The books that the world calls immoral are the books that show the world its own shame" (*The Picture* 224). Wilde, too, notes of this in a letter to the editor of the *St. James's Gazette* dated June 27, 1890, when he says that if he were a French author publishing *Dorian Gray* in Paris, he would not have received any criticism about the morality of the novel: "[T]here is not a single literary critic in France, on any paper of high standing, who would think for a moment of criticising it from an ethical standpoint" (Holland and Hart-Davis 432). If Wilde had published his story in France, he would have been writing in a different cultural situation, replete with its own genres. There, he would not have violated any generic expectations, because the antecedent genres in which his text participated would be imbued with different cultural values. But in doing so, Wilde would sacrifice the rhetorical effect that his violation had by decontextualizing his work from cultural situation of Victorian England.

Wilde was not the only one who believed that his work would have been better received in France. An unsigned critic in the *Daily Chronicle* condemns *Dorian Gray* as "a tale spawned from the leprous literature of the French *Décadents*" (Beckson 72). Although the remark is intended as an insult, this critic positions

the text within the domain of another genre: decadent literature. Decadent literature exudes the clime of *fin de siècle* England, which the critic describes as an atmosphere “heavy with mephitic odours of moral and spiritual putrefaction” (Beckson 72). Wilde implicitly welcomes this approach to his novel when, in the preface to the revised 1891 edition of the text, he claims, “All art is quite useless” (*The Picture* 2), and thereby separates himself from the moralistic tradition governing literature and criticism. Holland, too, would assent to such a reading, as it would amplify Wilde’s critique of “the hypocrisy of Victorian Englishmen, who... kept priding themselves sanctimoniously, upon their virtue” (70). Decadent literature ignores the idea of virtue and thus becomes an antipodean philosophical counter to the morality novel.

Despite the themes of decadent literature filtering through the text, Wilde avoids directly inserting *Dorian Gray* into the works of the Decadents. In fact, Wilde would try to displace his text from this genre with his 1891 edition of the text. This revision opened the opportunity for Wilde to add a repentance scene to appease the moralists or to pander to the Decadents by adding detail to Dorian’s depravity, yet Wilde responds to the constraints of both audiences by sanitizing certain scenes of decadence while still remitting moral retribution. Walter Pater, one of Wilde’s contemporaries and a champion of the decadent movement in literature, detected, even in the original publication, that *Dorian Gray* deviates from the generic expectations of the decadent novel. He wrote a critical review of the philosophy explored in the text and challenged its fidelity to decadent teachings: “To lose the moral sense... the sense of sin and righteousness, as Mr. Wilde’s heroes are bent on doing... is to lose, or lower, organisation, to become less complex, to pass from a higher to a lower degree of development” (Beckson 84).

Indeed, Dorian, by losing his moral sense as Pater says, would try to embody Wilde’s artistic belief that art should be separate from morality, yet these critical reactions articulate that the primary concern of the text is moral. Perhaps this is because Dorian himself seems conflicted about his morality. At one point, Dorian would seem to have abandoned his sense of morality when he gazes at his

portrait with “that pride of individualism that is half the fascination of sin, and smiling with secret pleasure at the misshapen shadow that had to bear the burden that should have been his own” (*The Picture* 144). However, at the end of the novel, Dorian’s attack on his portrait would have been without motivation if he truly relinquished his morality, because he would be unable to understand that the decaying portrait was a reflection of his soul. Despite Dorian’s denouncement of morals, he cannot renounce them and cannot elude their constraint on his view of art.

Although Wilde calls for the separation of “the sphere of art and the sphere of ethics” throughout his critical oeuvre (Holland and Hart-Davis 428), he concedes that he, himself, has muddled this distinction when he claims in the press that his work does have a moral: “All excess, as well as all renunciation, brings its own punishment” (430). He refers to this as “the only error in the book” (431), and Donald Lawler contends that this moral is “inescapable” for Wilde: “In order to have achieved [the removal of the moral], Wilde would have had to alter radically the basic conception of the story” (21). I, however, extend Lawler’s claim and hold that this moral is not merely an error, as Wilde confessed, but an inevitability of the text due to the workings of genre on both the writer and his audience.

Dorian and *Dorian Gray* show that both the artist and the audience cannot exist outside morality. Morality always expresses a constraint on both the creation and the reception of a text. Perhaps this claim sounds familiar, as it is exactly the same relationship that antecedent genre has with the writer and the audience. This is no mistake. Genre, as a container of cultural values, emulsifies the division that Wilde would hope to make between art and ethics, because, as a rhetorical concept, it necessarily introduces the cultural beliefs that formed it when it shapes both the creation and the reception of a text. Texts always participate in genre and cannot be “genreless” (Derrida 212). Therefore, all texts profess morality, and a moral will always exist in a genre to those who search for it.

Even decadent literature abides by the moral expectations of its own philosophy. The amorality that it would hope to achieve

is the moral of the genre. A moral merely solidifies and reinforces the belief system that inspires the rhetorical situation related to the genre. As such, I contend that the difference in function between the morality novel and the decadent novel is nonexistent. Both genres provide a heuristic for conducting one's life according to a set of philosophical principles. Genre, then, functions as the morality of a text. It relates expectations and conventions and, by extension, allows transgressions. When Dorian assails his portrait, he symbolically attacks the encroachment of morality in art, but we must remember that when Dorian first sees his picture, he does not attach any moral to it regardless to whether a moral, by the act of the artist, exists in it. Rather, the moral materializes when Dorian becomes a critic. Furthermore, it is only after Dorian imbues the portrait with a reflection of his morality that Basil, the artist, understands his work. Dorian asks Basil whether he can still see his "ideal" in the painting (*The Picture* 161), but Basil now can only see the portrait through the moral framework that Dorian gives him.

The context of genres in which Wilde writes and his audience reads sabotages Wilde's thesis that art can exist outside morality. However, it is by undermining his artistic philosophy that Wilde crafts his cultural critique. Both the readers who imposed the framework of the morality novel and those who insisted on decadent literature find the text without a suitable moral, but they agree that the novel expresses morality. Likewise, Wilde finds his audience, though expressing morality, to lack the morals that it preaches. The search for a missing moral is really an examination of society's conscience, and the absence of a moral ending emphasizes the hollowness of English morality.

In his biography of Wilde, Holland notes that Wilde was "secretly delighted by [*Dorian Gray's*] hostile reception," despite what this would mean for the commercial success of the novel (70). Indeed, Wilde should be glad: the public outcry confirmed that his readers heard the message broadcasted through genre. While our rhetorical genre theory approach, unlike a formalist reading, cannot lead us to an imperial interpretation of the text, it does allow us to see that *Dorian Gray* criticizes not only the relationship between art and morality but the relationship that society has with these concepts as well. Wilde uses

Dorian Gray to reflect actual Victorian life. In doing so, he supports his own anti-mimetic philosophy: Art that mirrors life as it really is lacks the beauty that we want in it and shows instead an image that society, like Dorian, finds repulsive. A revision of our genres is necessary to reshape a society's value system and produce the art that life wants to mirror.

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“Like a Rotten Apple to a Rotten Apple’s
Breast Affixed We Go Down Together”:
Submission as Intimacy in Djuna Barnes’
Nightwood

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“Bow Down,” begins Djuna Barnes’ 1935 genre-bending tragic spectacle, *Nightwood*. Immediately, the reader is faced with an imperative, a call to submit and bow down—but to what, or whom? Submission is a complicated and persistent theme in the novel. Set in the circuses, public houses, and private bedrooms of 1920s Paris, the narrative follows the turbulent love life of Robin Vote; her first marriage to the false Baron Felix Volkbein, whom she leaves for Nora Flood; Nora Flood, whom she leaves for Jenny Petherbridge; Jenny Petherbridge, whom she eventually leaves to wander in the woods surrounding Nora’s estates. The novel progresses through the semi-dialogues of Doctor Matthew O’Connor, a transgender unlicensed gynecologist whose inexplicable omnipotence and obscene eloquence comfort and criticize the other characters in turn. The novel, which begins with a call to submission, takes for its subject the life and loves of those who have been forced to submit to a dominant social order in which they are included only

as outcasts. *Nightwood* is not, however, a tale of victimization. Many critics see the novel as a celebration of marginalized identities, what Jane Marcus calls a “book of communal resistances” (144) by the oppressed against their oppressors. However, *Nightwood* criticism often makes the mistake of judging a reactionary and subversive text by the very terms it rejects—the hegemonic binaries of good/bad, human/beast, and dominance/submission. Even Marcus must “redeem” the characters by claiming that “*Nightwood* asserts that the outcast is normal and truly human” (164). Instead of celebrating the alternative worth of those who are “outside the ‘human type’—a wild thing caught in a woman’s skin” (155), Marcus simply flips the man/beast binary without understanding the way in which *Nightwood* disrupts it. The possibility that the value of submission itself could have been overturned in a text which challenges traditional mores has gone critically under examined. In this paper, I will argue the possibility that *Nightwood* imagines a submission which is not the abjected state of an oppressed people but a technique of their being in community; a type of bowing which is subversive rather than submissive to domination.

Though *Nightwood* is often understood as a lesbian or queer text, the critical hyper-focus on the characters’ sexuality overlooks a larger group represented: the marginalized and outcast. The novel speaks of Nikka the black circus performer; Mademoiselle Basquette, a woman without legs; prostitutes; circus performers; Frau Mann, whose name translates to Mrs. Man; expatriates; a defrocked priest—the cast of characters is made of those who are left out of society. These are characters who, like the Jewish Felix, are “heavy with impermissible blood” (Barnes 5). Within the dominant social order, there is no room for the religiously, sexually, racially, or bodily other to exist even as alternatives. Felix and his father, Guido, “lived as all Jews do, who, cut off from their people... find that they must inhabit a world whose constituents, being alien, force the mind to succumb to an imaginary populace” (5). The imperative to submit, to “bow down” or “succumb,” is thus one directed at the marginalized by the dominant populace. Only through submission and adoption of “alien” customs are Felix and his father allowed to “pass” in society.

The imperative to “bow down” demanded of the racially other is demanded too of the sexually other. Even the Doctor is forced to “pass” within the acceptable limits of society by following prescribed gender norms. Born biologically male, the Doctor mourns the fact that he “turned up this time as I shouldn’t have been, when it was a high soprano I wanted... with a womb as big as the king’s kettle” (97). Nevertheless he answers to male pronouns and dresses in male costume in society. Alone in his rooms after midnight, Nora finds him in drag at the beginning of chapter six. The sight shocks Nora, and the Doctor is forced to remove his wig and hide his feminine dress before their dialogue can continue. His transgression of gender boundaries stems dialog, and only his attempt to return to those boundaries allows conversation to continue. The Doctor and Felix demonstrate the way in which the submission demanded of the marginalized is simultaneously their only access to social legitimacy and also ultimately futile. They are “impossible people” (16), caught between the demand to submit to a society of which they can never be a part.

Submission is thus intrinsically part of each character in the book, all of whom are drawn from oppressed groups. Critical approaches to submission in the text often understand submission only in this traditional and negative connotation. Submission is treated as a state imposed upon the marginalized characters, in which they have no choice. This is, to a degree, true: the marginalized cannot help but be marginalized because it is a state imposed upon them by the dominant society. This does not mean, however, that as unique and intelligent agents, each of their responses to submission will or must be uniform. Each character has a unique style of submitting and of conceiving their own submission. Felix’s internalization of the dominant imperative expresses how submission is clearly not only imposed upon the characters but practiced and perpetuated by them. Political approaches that argue for both the negativity of submission and the “privileging of the oppressed” (Marcus 156) overlook the ways in which the submission is inseparable from those characters they see as privileged.

To understand how any situation or response to forced submission can be considered “the more *humane condition*” (Marcus 171), there must first be a new understanding of the political debates which take place within *Nightwood*. While political readings of the text see it as Barnes’ objection to her political era, explicit political debates are almost entirely absent from the text. The subject most debated in the text is love. Privileging the novel’s existence as a love story above its political statement is far from reductive—it conjures a political debate no less important than the one Marcus sees. The long history of miscegenation and sodomy laws which continue to be debated in the twenty-first century are a testament to the way in which the romantic and sexual lives of marginalized populations are as fiercely regulated as their individual existences. This invalidation of intimacy is a symptom of the oppression which the characters face: “I know my Sodomites,” says the Doctor, “and what the heart goes bang up against if it loves one of them... What do they find then, that this lover has committed the unpardonable error of not being able to exist—and they come down with a dummy in their arms” (100). Love is not an option for those who are categorically excluded from humanity. Nevertheless, *Nightwood* is concerned with the relationships of these excluded characters, be they of love or friendship. The characters who can achieve community and intimacy against this oppression are the ones who can be said to “succeed,” and it is in their success that the celebration of *Nightwood* is expressed.

If submission is inescapable for the characters in the text, then those who succeed in maintaining social contact are not marked by their liberation from submission but by their approach to it. The characters who can be said to “succeed” in this way are Robin and the Doctor, united by their irresistibility to other characters. Despite objecting to the Doctor’s vulgarity and his less-than-legitimate professional life, Felix realizes “that he would continue to like the Doctor, though he was aware that it would be in spite of a long series of convulsions of the spirit, analogous to the displacement in the fluids of an oyster, that must cover its itch with a pearl” (40). Similarly Robin, who abandons lover after lover, who is alcoholic,

unfaithful, and impossible to live with, is nevertheless desired and sought out by everyone but the Doctor himself. These two characters make up the poles of the text: everyone talks to the Doctor, and everyone talks about Robin. Each of the four main characters subscribe to a unique style of submission, but only Robin and the Doctor manage to make themselves sought after and indispensable to the lives of their friends and acquaintances. What makes the submission of these two distinct from that of Nora and Felix, such that it allows them to form social intimacy where the others cannot, requires a careful examination of each character's style of submission.

Submission is Felix' primary mannerism. He is always looking explicitly for "someone" (12) to whom to bow, whether it be in the imaginary form of the "great past" or a stranger who resembles royalty. Bowing is his way of reifying the myths upon which he has built his (false) identity. His submission is hierarchical and participates in the traditional binary of dominance/submission, in which Felix must submit to a dominating entity which holds (and withholds) all power over him.

In this style of submission, his interpersonal relationships become subordinate to his obsession. Upon first meeting Robin, the Doctor asks Felix if he has ever thought of marriage, and "The Baron admitted that he had; he wished a son who would feel as he felt about the 'great past'" (42). From their inception, both his marriage and his son are means of perpetuating his duty to the past. His hierarchical style of submission makes him unable to prioritize Robin or their relationship, and their marriage cannot last.

Nora appears initially as Felix's antithesis, Robin's second lover and the eternally unbent. In opposition to Felix, she is described as upright to a fault (102) and "immune from her own descent" (55-7). She never bows, even to her lover, neither does she make Felix's mistake in making Robin secondary—instead, Nora's entire life becomes devoted to Robin alone. Despite these differences, however, Nora and Felix share a traditional, hierarchized model of submission which manifests in Nora's obsession with monogamy. The institution of monogamy, what Dana Seitler calls "The couple

as a social form" (548), is based upon the idea of the two becoming subordinate, even indistinguishable, from the couple as a singular unit. The couple is more powerful than either individual, both of whom must surrender their separate identities for the sake of the one. Nora herself describes the future she wished to have with Robin in this way when she says, "I knew in that bed Robin should have put me down. In that bed we would have forgotten our lives in the extremity of memory, moulted our parts, as figures in the waxworks are moulted down to their story, so we would have been broken down to our love" (167). Nora's monogamy implies a hierarchy as much as Felix's monarchy, except that Nora's imaginary ruler is the image of herself and Robin as a couple.

The reality of their situation is a testament to the incompatibility of Robin and Nora's concept of love: their home becomes "the museum of their encounter" (61), and Robin becomes a "fossil" (61) in Nora's heart long before they separate. Their home is the manifestation of what Seitler calls the "burden of stability the couple form requires.... Inside the domestic interiors of the museum, love becomes instantly dead" (Seitler 548). Nora's obsession with conforming to the submission implicit in monogamy kills her relationship with Robin, and, by extension, Nora herself.

Despite their apparent differences, both Nora and Felix conceive of submission in the traditional value binary of dominance/submission in which there is a strict hierarchy of power. Though their ruling entities are largely imaginary or immaterial (Christianity for Felix and heteronormative monogamy for Nora), they nevertheless have real and tyrannical effects upon their subjects. Both Nora and Felix submit in a way that requires them to relinquish their own identity and power, a submission which not only oppresses them but perpetuates and reifies the normative standard they can never achieve: they become the agents of their own "disqualification." It is not insignificant that both fail to maintain their love with Robin.

Robin and the Doctor's styles of submission are best expressed in the final chapter of the book, "The Possessed." In the final scene, Robin sinks to all fours and begins to run and bark like a dog. The

scene, though one of chaos, is nevertheless described as “obscene and touching” (179). The many critics who understand this scene as a veiled sex metaphor fatally reduce the scene to just another sex joke (Herring 16). Yet this scene is the closest thing to a description of sex that Barnes includes in the tale of three sets of lovers. While critics have been distracted by the hints of bestiality, what is more important than her romp with the dog is the manner in which woman and dog cavort, a manner expressed in the title: they are both wild, hysterical, and possessed. It is impossible to pinpoint, however, what exactly Robin and the dog have been possessed by. Though Robin lacks control, she does not do so by handing that control over to another. The lack of an identifiable dominating entity is the crucial difference between Robin’s style of submission and those of Nora and Felix.

Robin’s is a submission which lacks hierarchy and subverts dominance. Robin’s energetic comingling with the dog is different from Nora’s “be[ing] broken down to our love” (167) because Robin and the dog are not reduced by their union but amplified. They share an ecstatic experience which cannot be wholly described as human becoming dog nor dog becoming human, but in which both add the characteristics of the other to their own. Instead of two becoming one, or one submitting to another, two exist ecstatically together. Thus, the final chapter, which critics have seen as “faulty,” “devoid” (Pochoda 188), and script-like (De Lauretis 120), formally reflects its subject: it is void of interiority in the form of narration because Robin herself is not self-contained. There is nothing within her she must expose in the text because she is possessed and completely opened out—to Nora, to the dog, to the night, to her own physicality. She has submitted entirely and the result is not a possession but one who is possessed.

Both Robin and the Doctor, the two who best realize this style of intimacy, are characterized by their anonymity. The Doctor, who “knows everything... because he’s been everywhere at the wrong time and has now become anonymous” (89), and Robin, who is unable to maintain her monogamous relationship with Nora because “two spirits were working in her, love and anonymity” (60). To Nora,

these two seem incompatible. Marcus reads Nora and Robin's relationship as a situation where "[Robin's] abjection is the reverse of Nora's uprightness, and it is privileged in the novel as the more *humane condition*. She doesn't want to be saved; she wants to be free" (171). Yet the Doctor also sees that, "every bed [Robin] leaves, without caring, fills her heart with peace and happiness" (155). To Robin, love is anonymity and freedom. Robin does not simply want to be free in the political sense that Marcus sees, but to have a love that is defined by its freedom. The reason that neither Marcus nor Nora can see this as a legitimate type of love is their unconscious prescription to yet another traditional binary: that of freedom/monogamy, in which monogamy is a legitimate form of love and thus freedom cannot be. Robin does not reject the traditional concept of love so much as she strives for an alternative.

Nightwood is not a defense of the queer or marginalized for the benefit of a "normal" audience, but a tool written for those populations as their own defense. Nightwood reclaims the submission demanded of the marginalized in a way that subverts their domination by the hegemonic. As Thomas Heise notes, "In *Nightwood*, the terms of exclusion are the terms of shared pleasure" (Heise 316). By embracing their subjugation and turning it into their highest form of intimacy, the imperative loses its power to be used against them. *Nightwood* is a tale of victims, not a tale of victimization. It is an exploration of the tragic intimacy that is both the "unendurable" and "the beginning of the curve of joy" (125) for those who cannot exist but must still love. *Nightwood* imagines a new submission for those oppressed by the dominant call to "Bow Down," a submission which subverts the hierarchical to become a tool by which the marginalized can achieve previously withheld intimacy and community. "Let go Hell," says the Doctor, "and your fall will be broken by the roof of Heaven" (133).

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Sanctioned Social Evil: Textual Exploitation of the Prostitute in Victorian Discourse

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Frequently (dis)gracing the pages of the Victorian novel, the female prostitute figured prominently in nineteenth-century discourse. Novelists portrayed the “Great Social Evil” in terms of the “fallen woman,” an archetypal lady who had, often through no fault of her own, become sexually corrupted. This metaphorical rendering influenced the public treatises written against prostitution, as the fallen woman became “the woman found in the reports of the statistician” (Wendelin 53). Reviled for her moral disintegration and feared for her potential to corrupt the public, this prostitute represented a host of precarious cultural sentiments. An examination of this appears in *Tainted Souls and Painted Faces: The Rhetoric of Fallenness in Victorian Culture*, where Amanda Anderson views discussions of the fallen woman (the prostitute’s literary persona) as the fictive embodiment of social, economic, and cultural hazards threatening the stability of Victorian hierarchy.

In a rhetoric closely mirroring that utilized in literature, many historical texts effaced the identity of the figure. I argue here that such texts—like William Acton’s *Prostitution*, Ralph Wardlaw’s *Lectures on Magdalenism*, and a series of anonymous newspaper letters—instead erected a monolithic straw woman, displacing fears

related to physical disease and female sexuality onto the figure of the prostitute herself, who soon became an image for much more than she really was, a lower class woman seeking financial security. One poet, however, tried a different tack. Glimpsing the void beneath the false façade of the culturally appropriated and exploited prostitute, Thomas Hardy foregrounds the fears of many of his male contemporaries in “The Ruined Maid.” In the poem, a sexually independent and financially self-sustaining woman hides in plain view. Given the reality of the female prostitute’s impoverished existence, it becomes clear, through his manipulation of the cultural tropes surrounding this figure, that these men directed their discursive strategies at spectres, at frightening entities existing only within their minds. Casting new light upon prominent publications on prostitution, Hardy’s poem invites an alternative reading of fictional depictions of the fallen woman that exposes the relationship between literary imagery and widespread, cultural fear.

Acton and Wardlaw’s works, and the 1858 letters to the Editor of *The Times* mirror fictional texts in underlying ideology, though they depict the public nuisance rather than the beautiful wretch of literature. In accordance with the rhetoric of fallenness encapsulated within fictional narratives, as described by Anderson, public prostitution texts eliminate the agency of the female prostitute and expose a fearful regard for financially or sexually independent women. In creating and then attacking a weaponless and vulnerable target, these men illustrate the immensity of their fears, which, according to Anderson, are related to “an aggressive female sexuality” that “upset[s] the structuring binary opposition between masculinity and a sexless, maternal femininity” (13). As a narratological remedy, many of the authors included here fundamentally appropriate the voice of this culturally silenced figure to endorse a master narrative preserving male dominance. Condemning the prostitute’s apparent corruption of the mental and physical health of *male* society, none of these men acknowledges the prostitute’s inherent right to speak as a human being, despite her prominence in their discursive ontologies.

As a general theme, writings on prostitution frequently focused upon bodily illness. Reverend Ralph Wardlaw's 1843 tract, for example, addresses prostitution's effect upon the male body. Clearly seeking to frighten his readers, Wardlaw creates a displeasing portrait of a body inflamed by syphilis, including "the destruction of the eyesight, and of the palate and tonsils; the rotting of the flesh from the bones; the exfoliation of the bones themselves" (55-56). The physical disintegration of the male body serves as a visual representation of fears catalyzed by "the illicit intercourse of the sexes," a topic the scandalized Wardlaw dramatizes (25). To a male mind entrenched in organized religion, prostitution represented an abnormal and socially unsanctioned relationship between men and women beyond the prescribed marriage state, and, as such, was problematic to those wishing to maintain proper relations amongst the genders. An initial indicator of the "pervasive concerns about individuality and social identity" inextricably linked with nineteenth-century male anxiety and discourse, Wardlaw's text refuses to grant the prostitute any sense of willful agency (Anderson 18). However, he takes this repression a step further, replacing female agency with male authority. In a revelatory remark, he claims that "many of them [contemporary female prostitutes] may themselves have been the subjects of seduction by the other sex," an apparently happenstance occurrence (Wardlaw 77). In this perspective, men catalyzed the initial moral ruination of these women with "no means of cure" or redemption; the women presumably had no choice but to bring about the physical degradation of other men (55). This intellectual maneuver of placing agency into the hands of men underscores a discursive tradition of gender imbalance threaded throughout nineteenth-century writing, one firmly rooted in anxiety and oppression.

Similarly emphasizing the physicality of venereal disease as a concern centered upon the male body, Victorian gynecologist William Acton published his own public discussion on prostitution in 1857. In the case of syphilis, once the male body became infected with the licentious disease, it was only a matter of time before the corruption of the brain ensued, "producing paralysis, convulsions,

and other nervous phenomena” (Acton 37). With the brain typically perceived as the seat of male authority via its intellectual ability to craft master narratives and solidify power, one can see how venereal diseases would have been perceived as fearfully problematic in more ways than one. Portraying prostitution as a “grave internal malady . . . deep within the body social,” Acton equates the physical male body with the larger social body of the nation—one firmly operated and controlled by male members of society (viii). If ignored, “the eruptive tendencies of prostitution,” thanks to male perpetuation of the practice, could thwart public morality and destroy the entire culture (161). England, at the hands of certain men, could prosper or decline, according to Acton, and it was upon male authority that the responsibility of the nation’s preservation rested. Though Acton calls for a “graver treatment of seducers and deserters of women” (169), and though he addresses issues salient to Victorian patriarchy, he echoes other public writings on prostitution elevating men above women, and he reinforces the female position of inferiority when he portrays them as “the helpless and shuddering victim of seduction” (301). The destruction of the female prostitute’s body is mentioned only marginally and impersonally; he refers to female patients not by name but by symptom. Patient Seven of a Mr. Lawrence, for example, receives “very large sores on thighs” as her identification, which is eclipsed by her symptoms (53).

However, this is not the most problematic treatment of the prostitute at the hands of male discourse. Forcibly commandeering the figure of the prostitute to address individual and social concerns, Acton introduces the practice of appropriating the voice of the prostitute, enabling her culturally unacknowledged words to reach light, but only within the specific setting of male-oriented literature. The control exerted over the figure through vocal appropriation essentially removes any trace of personality or self-willed action, making it seem as though prostitutes were destined for such employment, simply by way of lower-class existence and lack of economic resources. In this male-centric perspective, the prostitute truly was a product of her sociocultural milieu, “the mere effect of systematic forces” (Anderson 198). Acton includes in his treatise

what he claims to be a factual personal account of prostitution, in the form of a lengthy confessional interpreted according to his notion of the female perspective of the practice. “I am obligated to go a bad way,” claims the woman, and what follows is an extensive description of the hardships facing the lower class, unmarried women of the nineteenth century (Acton 22). With upper-class wealth and stability unavailable to the majority of the English populace, many women fell into the trap of prostitution, unable as they were to perceive of alternate means to provide for themselves. That Acton’s text carried a steep price presumably so as not to fall “into young hands without proper interpretation and commentary” (viii) but discusses “the needlewoman of London” (20) illustrates the disparity between the wealthier readership and the lower class prostitute and places his discourse into the hands of those most capable of influencing public practice.

Appealing to the public less directly, a constellation of anonymous letters to the editor of the *London Times*, published throughout February of 1858, attests to this complex relationship between society and prostitution. Additionally, the dubious veracity of these accounts, often believed to be fictionalized narratives, highlights a profound and perverse example of vocal appropriation of the prostitute. Parading the letters as authentic, the instigators mock the very real plight of struggling women. A publicized conversation regarding “The Delicate Question” began on February 4, 1858 when “One More Unfortunate” contacted *The Times* with an account of her descent into prostitution. However, due to her prior “experience as a governess in a highly respectable family,” one begins to suspect that things are other than they appear (One More Unfortunate). Prostitution has historically been the fate of the downtrodden and the weary—the *lower class* downtrodden and weary—as Wardlaw and Acton take great pains to delineate through various statistical data and faulty reasoning. Furthermore, the rhetoric of One More Unfortunate’s narrative mirrors diction utilized by men addressing “notorious women,” such as the harlot staring “impudently from out her luxurious brougham.” Intensely cognizant of societal conventions and literary tropes regarding fallen

women, “she” has clearly internalized the normative ideologies of the nineteenth-century patriarchy. As such, the literary fallen woman, and subsequently, “One More Unfortunate,” does not represent the actual class of people categorized under the title of prostitute. What’s more, “One More Unfortunate” mimics the agenda of the male publications when she asserts that “it was men who made us what we are.” In a counterintuitive maneuver, she disavows agency, despite the fact that her writing to the widely read periodical would seem to indicate a very personal contrivance on her part.

An assessment of the letters of another anonymous contributor to the discussion, “Another Unfortunate,” casts a shadow upon any pretense of reality the first author may have claimed. Published on February 24, 1858, mere weeks after “One More Unfortunate’s” final post, this letter potentially reveals what may have been a masculine, sociopolitical agenda hidden in plain view. Claiming that “my parents did not give me any education,” and that she possessed a standard lower-class upbringing, “Another Unfortunate” seems to fit the type of poor, wayward woman detailed by Acton better than does “One More Unfortunate.” However, her clear mental grasp of her situation, replete with references to Rousseau and a well-versed discussion of the integrity of her fellow prostitutes (“What is morality?”), suggests knowledge and vocabulary inaccessible to the figure “she” attempts to represent—“Another Unfortunate.” In this light, it is likely the entire enterprise was fabricated—by whom, it is difficult to say, though the letters undoubtedly passed under the male gaze of *The Times* editor John Thaddeus Delane (Wendelin 59). What is also known is that women did not often openly critique male authority, as these letters do, and as such it is unlikely they would have been printed had they been penned by women—and prostitutes at that. When read alongside Acton and Wardlaw, the letters seem to partake in a related social project designed to maintain patriarchal authority and the master narrative licensing that authority.

Supporting this publically sanctioned social project was a precariously-situated hierarchy, as revealed in Thomas Hardy’s “The

Ruined Maid.” Hardy’s poem reports the speech of two women as they discuss the fashionable ruin of fallenness. The prostitute, Amelia, encounters an old friend, who expresses wonder at her elegant appearance and luxurious lifestyle:

“O ‘Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!
 Who could have supposed I should meet you in Town?
 And whence such fair garments, such prosperi-ty?” —
 “O didn’t you know I’d been ruined?” said she. (Hardy 1-4)

The entire poem consists of this dialogue, entirely in quotations, and no traditional “speaker” presents himself (or herself) within the lines. “The Ruined Maid” is a manifestation of a double appropriation of the female voice: that of the “normal” woman and that of the prostitute, both encapsulated within a male framework of verse. One statement, “But now I’m bewitched by your delicate cheek,” highlights the overt female sexuality present in the figure of the prostitute and hints at a male anxiety quietly woven throughout these texts—that of being dominated by a powerful woman (Hardy 14). As illustrated in *Lectures on Magdalenism*, men were perceived as possessors of an insatiable sexual appetite: “for why has nature given us appetites, but to be indulged?” (Wardlaw 82). The problem arises in the interaction between uncontrollable male desire and the diseased body of the female prostitute. But none of this seems evident upon first glance. It is only in the current context that we begin to understand its deeper implications. When read alongside historical texts, all of which reveal a deep thread of male anxiety, “The Ruined Maid” becomes an ironic rendering of this very insecurity. Indeed, Hardy taunts the fears of the anxious male writer when he foregrounds the agency of his prostitute. Amelia consciously trades a weary life of “digging potatoes, and spudding up docks” for one of “feathers, a fine sweeping gown” (Hardy 6, 25). Revising the literary trope of degradation into an act of positive transformation, Hardy’s prostitute emerges from her corruption a happier, more confident woman who struts about town like a respectable lady. Hardy highlights a prevailing fear of the anxious male authors when he portrays his fallen woman as unrecognizable from the respectable women of London: “Some polish is gained

with one's ruin" (12). How is the appropriate "intercourse of the sexes" to be maintained when the Victorian symbol of immorality, the prostitute, hides herself within plain view (Wardlaw 25)? Hardy's incongruous depiction of his wealthy prostitute reveals a fear that was perhaps unwarranted, a deep-seated anxiety that pathologically permeated many Victorian male minds. In reality, the female prostitute was lower class, likely infected with venereal disease, and certainly not elegant. Such insights shed new light upon nineteenth-century prostitution texts, in both fiction and essay form, hinting at a possible irony that may be found in the novelization of the fallen woman.

The unfair appropriation of the figure of the prostitute, while potentially beneficial to those wishing to alleviate gender-related anxieties, illustrates the extent to which some men felt threatened by the powerful feminine form, possibly in their beloved Queen. A woman who embodied both motherly concern and stoic independence, Victoria was not easily classified by the prescribed notion of the female gender; she rejected the formalized structure of gender dichotomy, and as such did not fit easily into the hierarchy long established by male purveyors of England's master narrative. Ruling for nearly sixty-four years, Queen Victoria refused to relinquish her authority and served as a constant reminder of male anxieties. Since male authors could not directly confront their fears, they instead created a straw woman, the prostitute "exiled from social relations and lacking the autonomy and coherence of the self-determining masculine self"—a figure whose public condemnation would have been socially acceptable and merited (Anderson 198). Embodying a multitude of fears—related to physical disease, mental corruption, and powerfully sexualized women—the prostitute figured greatly into discursive texts directed toward maintenance of the historically validated male authority. Appropriation of the prostitute's voice became the primary vehicle of this enterprise, and this act placed the dominant ideology into the mouth of the marginalized "victim" of male literature. The prostitute's self-agency was effaced, her socioeconomic status was exploited, and her personal perspective was replaced with a falsified and self-serving

male interpretation. Her concerns regarding this pervasive literary exploitation remain unknown, as do the contents of her genuine voice. In at least one contemporary text, however, “The Ruined Maid,” her voice exposes the futility of this male discourse in a culture already dominated by men. Ironically appropriating the voice of the prostitute, the poem facilitates a reexamination of the fears lurking behind contemporary novels that address the fallen woman.

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A Single Glance: The Role of the Past in Anna Akhmatova's "Lot's Wife"

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Written in the post-revolutionary Soviet Union, Anna Akhmatova's elegy "Lot's Wife" highlights the importance of the individual in a time when political leaders sacrificed the good of the individual in the name of progress. Many lost their lives in the Russian Civil War from 1918 to 1921. In the years of famine and destruction following, the Soviet regime insisted on an erasure of past political and social practices and the implementation of a new social order in which the bourgeois elite lost their places of privilege and significance. Having grown up in a bourgeois family during the pre-revolutionary days, Akhmatova remembered Russia as the beautiful place of her childhood and sought to preserve its memory through her poetry. "Lot's Wife," one such poem, illuminates the inescapability of the past and the role of memory in defining and giving worth to the individual; expounding on her theme of memory through allegory, metaphor, diction⁹, and strong imagery, Akhmatova questions the actions taken by revolutionary leaders to disregard and demolish the past.

Though Lot and his wife run from Sodom, Akhmatova's diction throughout the poem indicates stagnancy in their minds and actions. In the poem's opening line, Akhmatova describes the husband as having "trailed¹⁰ God's messenger" (l.1), implying

heaviness in his movements which contrasts with his wife's "quick feet" when escaping Sodom (12). Lot struggles to move forward, though he does not take his eyes off of God's messenger or the road ahead as his wife does. At first reading, his wife's fast movements may indicate a great willingness to leave Sodom. However, in light of her sudden glance backwards despite the messenger's order not to look back, this movement seems only to indicate that Lot's wife fights to move forward even as she is being pulled backward. The easiest way to part from any beloved person or place is to part ways quickly and thoughtlessly. Read in this manner, even the wife's hasty retreat from Sodom signals her great love for the city.

Unfortunately, Lot's wife does not succeed in her escape. Lot's wife looks back, and her feet become "rooted to the spot" (12). The word "rooted" invokes the image of a plant in the ground which has formed strong connections within the earth. The wife has formed similarly strong connections within Sodom which tether her to that soil when she tries to escape Sodom's territory. Though her "quick feet" suggest advancement and progress, the term "rooted" signals a halt in this progress. Lot's wife cannot move forward because the past pulls her back. As this painful longing for the past seizes her, she no longer has any desire for the future but becomes "paralyzed"¹¹ (9). When her mind allows her pain to restrict her thoughts to memories of Sodom, any physical power she holds to escape the impending destruction vanishes. Through memory, the past claims her as its own and refuses to release her.

Sodom ingrains itself into her so that she cannot escape it; no matter where she travels, she will always be irrevocably connected with that place and its people. Akhmatova writes, "But anguish spoke loudly to his wife: / It is not too late, you can still gaze / At the red towers of your native Sodom" (3-5). Personified anguish refers to her "native" (5) Sodom instead of her "home" Sodom. "Native" is defined as "inherent, innate; belonging to or connected with something by nature or natural constitution" ("Native"). When referring to a person, it is defined as "connected with another or others by birth or race; closely related" ("Native"). However

righteous Lot is, Lot's wife is a Sodomite; the city forms the core of her identity. She is leaving her kin as well as her countrymen. Even if Lot's wife keeps moving, a part of her will still die with the city. Recognizing this role of one's homeland in forming one's identity, Akhmatova suggests to her readers that one's homeland dwells within a person in much the same way that a person dwells within his or her homeland; the land becomes part of the person's identity just as the person becomes part of the land's identity.

Lot's wife's ultimate transformation into the pillar of salt serves as a metaphor for her inability to escape Sodom because of the memories and kinship ties which bind her to that place. Akhmatova even refers to it as her "fate" to be rooted there (13). Interestingly, Akhmatova does not attribute the same fate to her two children who were born there. Certainly, the children do not have as many memories of Sodom as their mother and would perhaps more readily adapt to a new environment than either of their parents. Although the children play no large role in the Biblical story, Akhmatova might also speculate that the children do not really belong to the city because they do not care enough about it to appreciate its former beauty and look back along with their mother. Anguish speaks only to Lot's wife.

Even the promise of the future cannot obliterate the wife's yearning for the past, as Akhmatova makes clear in the imagery of the poem's first stanza. The sun-like appearance of God's messenger looming "[h]uge and bright, over the black mountain" summons an image of the sun rising over the earth after a dark night (2). Despite this suggestion of a brighter, more promising future, the wife feels herself drawn back to the memories of past happiness and the innocence of youth. In those days, Lot was not simply "the just man" (1); he was her "beloved husband" (8); a distance has formed in their relationship which sheds light on their differing actions when fleeing from Sodom. Perhaps the "husband" would also have turned, thinking about the earlier days of his marriage, but "the just man" fixes his eyes solely on the will of God. This distance between husband and wife echoes the overall sense of loss in the poem.

In spite of future promises, Lot's wife only sees the loss of the

present against the fullness of her past life. Akhmatova writes, “It is not too late, you can still gaze //...At the empty windows of the tall house / Where you bore children to your beloved husband” (4, 7-8). In the same house in which she “bore children” to Lot, the windows appear desolate. Akhmatova contrasts the image of childbearing with the image of desolate windows to imply fruitfulness in the past which starkly differs from the barrenness of the present. In her youth the wife enjoyed singing in the city square and found pleasure in her spinning work. Akhmatova writes, “It is not too late, you can still gaze//...At the square where you sang, at the courtyard where you spun” (4, 6). Unfortunately, she finds herself forced to flee the place that once brought her much happiness. Similarly, Akhmatova finds herself forced to choose between fleeing Russia during the years of hardships or staying and enduring those hardships. She, like Lot’s wife, could have run to safety, but she chose to suffer with her people and witness the destruction of her country. In her book review of Anatoly Nayman’s biography of Akhmatova, Elizabeth Tucker notes:

Through it all—the hungry days of revolution; the dark days of two world wars; evacuation to Tashkent, Uzbekistan; Stalin’s terror; and years of poetic silence when she eked out a living translating other poets’ works—Akhmatova recalled the Europe she had visited in her youth as in a dream. But she never for an instant considered emigrating. That would have been tantamount to a betrayal of her culture and, above all, the Russian language. (310)

For Akhmatova, loyalty to one’s homeland took precedence above all else, even personal safety and beliefs. In protest of countless atrocities, including homelessness, starvation, unjust executions, and ruthless working conditions, Akhmatova wrote poetry to be the voice of her people.

Faced with the turmoil and emptiness of Russia’s present state, Akhmatova became disillusioned with the vision of the revolution. Similarly, Lot’s wife experiences a loss of physical and symbolic vision when she turns to take one last painful glance at her beloved homeland. Akhmatova writes, “She glanced, and, paralyzed by

deadly pain, / Her eyes no longer saw anything” (9-10). The wife “glanced” (9), though “anguish” (3) instructed her to “gaze” (4). Despite anguish’s call, her eyes do not linger on her beloved city; she knows if she wants to continue moving forward she cannot keep her eyes on the past for too long. Still, she wants one last glimpse of her homeland, and for this desire she perishes. Looking back, she realizes how much she has lost. Sodom is her last physical vision—the last image she sees before darkness covers her eyes forever. Though her mind tries to focus on the bright light ahead, the immaterial vision of Sodom calls to her in memories, taking the place of any vision of the future. Like Akhmatova, Lot’s wife cannot envision herself living anywhere but among her countrymen.

Through recognizable imagery, Akhmatova uses the Biblical destruction of Sodom as an allegory for the destruction of Moscow during the revolutionary and post-revolutionary years. In the fifth line of the poem, anguish calls forth the wife’s memories of her youth, beginning with the “red towers of [her] native Sodom” (5) and “the square where [she] sang” (6). The sense of community implied in the mention of the city square, a public space for community gatherings and festivities, echoes city squares of Biblical times but also the Red Square in Moscow. While Sodom faced physical destruction, Moscow faced both the physical destruction of its architecture and a transformation of its landscape and internal operations to conform to Soviet aims. David A. Webber, a professor of anthropology at the University of Wisconsin, writes:

Moscow...retained some of its older landmarks, though they were modified (physically or ideologically) to better suit socialist purposes: street names were changed; churches were demolished or, in rare cases, converted into museum space; and existing museums had their subject matter altered. Skyscrapers were built in the Stalinist wedding cake style, statues of Soviet heroes were placed in all prominent areas and squares, and the symbols of the state were etched into nearly every new construction. This was done in accordance with Soviet policies of atheism, internationalism...and communist ideology, as well as with the need for the Soviet

government to create a clean break with and in contrast to the Russian pre-revolutionary past. (51)

Revolutionary leaders often believe that the preservation of the past, even in buildings, will easily tempt people to remember former days under previous rulers. They wish to change the landscape of their countrymen's minds by changing their country's physical landscape. Faced with the literal breakdown of her home, Akhmatova viewed the destroyed buildings as a link to her childhood, mourned their passing, and wished to gaze upon them once more.

Akhmatova's personal loss only added to the sorrows of hundreds of thousands of people who suffered. While she lived under a government which considered the loss of human life little but a necessary means to an end, Akhmatova argued that the individual life still bears importance. She writes:

Who will weep for this woman's fate?
 Isn't her death the least significant?
 But my heart will never forget the one
 Who gave up her life for a single glance. (13-16)

In the midst of so much violence and death, Akhmatova writes this poem in remembrance of the individual who fights for change but perhaps often misses the pre-revolutionary days of peace, youth, and innocence. Although revolutionary leaders only view that one person as part of a much larger statistic of faceless fatalities—the “least significant”—Akhmatova chooses to let her heart dwell on this individual. Though death may be a “fate”—destiny, an inevitable end—from which the individual cannot escape, Akhmatova rejects that as a reasonable excuse for the individual to be forgotten. Her tribute to Lot's wife attributes value to the individual's life, no matter how short or seemingly trivial it may be.

Akhmatova's emphasis on the individual and on memory in the poem “Lot's Wife” argues against the common revolutionary tactic of erasing and devaluing the past. In times of revolution, change seems to be the best solution to current problems. Rather than learning from the past, reformists try to change the status quo by forming new opinions and ideas. Unfortunately, they often lose the beauty of the past in their haste for progress. They forget that, for better or for worse, the past shaped the country in which they live and each individual who lives there. In “Lot's

Wife,” Akhmatova does not condemn progress, but she questions the end result of progress which does not value the contributions of the past or the sacrifices made by individuals for that progress. Ninety years later, she still asks her readers, “Could you simply abandon the land which birthed and formed you? Would you not, along with Lot’s wife, give a single parting glance to the past?”

Notes

1. This poem was originally written in Russian, so the diction presented in this paper is as translated by Judith Hemschemeyer.
2. This poem was originally written in Russian, so the diction presented in this paper is as translated by Judith Hemschemeyer.
3. “Paralyze” means “to deprive of energy or power; to render helpless, inactive, or ineffective; (now) esp. to make (a person) unable to think or act normally through fear, etc.” (OED 2a).

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Ahab's Failed Godhood: Thor and the Midgard Serpent in *Moby-Dick*

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"There is one God that is Lord over the earth, and one Captain that is lord over the Pequod," Captain Ahab tells Starbuck, who has dared to question one of his commands (Melville 517). In this instance and many others, Ahab, of Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, elevates himself to a level of godlike authority in his role as captain of the Pequod. Whether or not Ahab achieves the divine sanction he seeks for his quest is more problematic. Ahab is "proud as a Greek god" (Melville 514), and when Fedallah prophesies that Ahab will be killed by hemp, Ahab joyously asserts his own immortality: "The gallows, ye mean.—I am immortal then, on land and on sea" (Melville 542). Though Ahab proves as mortal as any other man, his human identity is complicated by the mythical terms with which he is described. Elijah portrays Ahab as a figure shrouded in the supernatural: Ahab "lay like dead for three days and nights" after an incident off Cape Horn and lost his leg to a whale "according to [a] prophecy" (Melville 101). This imposing man is on a quest of mythical proportions: to kill the White Whale, a myth unto itself. The battle of man (or god) against beast is a common mythical trope, but is Ahab hero or villain, god or mortal, in his own myth? Though Ahab has been discussed in relation to many of *Moby-Dick's*

mythical allusions, little has been said about the captain's obvious counterpart in Norse mythology: Thor. The numerous similarities between Melville's tale of Ahab and Moby Dick and the Norse myth of Thor and the Midgard Serpent emphasize the differences between the apocalyptic end of each rivalry and demonstrate Ahab's ultimate failure to live up to the god-status he establishes for himself.

As scholars have noted, *Moby-Dick* is not only filled with mythological allusions, but the novel's central struggle is also of mythical proportions. In his book, *The Wake of the Gods: Melville's Mythology*, Bruce Franklin argues that the comparisons between the whale and other gods in *Moby-Dick* do not "show that Moby Dick is divine" (65) but rather serve to ridicule these myths in the face of Melville's superior myth of the White Whale (67). In his analysis, Franklin contrasts the struggle between Ahab and the whale with various fish and dragon myths alluded to in *Moby-Dick*: Vishnu, Jonah, Saint George, and Perseus (97). The central savior-and-dragon myth of *Moby-Dick*, which Franklin claims is not ridiculed, is the Egyptian myth of Osiris and Typhon. Franklin claims that the comparisons between Moby Dick and the other myths ridicule the religions based on the other mythologies "by showing these myths to be insufficient 'half-truths'" (97). However, as Erik Thurin observes, Franklin fails to list the myth of Thor and the Midgard Serpent even among the lesser fish and dragon myths that Melville mocks, despite the clear parallels and the novel's references to the Norse (Thurin 70).

Thurin notes the peculiar absence of scholarly analysis of allusions to Norse mythology on *Moby-Dick* and attempts to remedy this deficiency. Melville was clearly familiar with Norse mythology: He read *Frithiofs Saga* in 1848 and borrowed a copy of Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841) in 1850; the latter has a whole chapter devoted to Norse myths, including the struggle between Thor and the Midgard Serpent (Thurin 69). The numerous references to the Norse in Melville's earlier novel *Mardi* (1849) also attest to the author's familiarity with Norse mythology (Thurin 62-65). Thurin argues that early sections of *Moby-Dick* make explicit references to the Norse, which serve to compare Ahab with

Norse royalty. In the chapter entitled “Ahab,” whaling is called a “wild Scandinavian vocation” (Melville 133-134), and Thurin claims that Melville is certainly referring to the Vikings rather than contemporary Scandinavians (67). Just a few pages later, Ahab sends someone to fetch his ivory stool, which is compared to “the thrones of sea-loving Danish kings” in “old Norse times” (Melville 141, Thurin 67). Thurin claims that, as the novel progresses and explicit allusions become scarce, Ahab is raised from the level of Norse king to god through implicit allusions to Norse mythology (Thurin 67). In his analysis, Thurin does mention the parallel between Ahab and Moby Dick and Thor and the Midgard Serpent. However, he does not fully explore all of the implications of this comparison. This essay aims to expand upon the parallels between Ahab and Thor and to examine one significant aspect in which these two figures differ: the role each plays when battling his foe in an apocalyptic battle. Analyzing the differences between the sinking of the Pequod and the destruction at Ragnarok adds nuance to Ahab’s characterization in the novel, revealing the ultimate failure of his attempts at godhood.

The myth of Thor and the Midgard Serpent is found in both the *Prose Edda* and the *Poetic Edda*. According to Snorri Sturluson’s “Gylfaginning” in the *Prose Edda*, the Midgard Serpent is one of the monster children of the trickster god Loki and the giantess Angrboda (Sturluson 26). Odin throws the troublesome serpent into the sea, where it “lies in the midst of the ocean encircling all lands and bites on its own tail” (Sturluson 27). Thurin notes the similarities between this serpent and the White Whale. While Moby Dick does not literally circle the globe, he has been “encountered in opposite latitudes at one and the same time” and “transports himself with a swiftness to the most widely distant points” (Melville 197,198). According to Thurin, Melville “goes out of his way to make it clear that the Pequod is all over the place because Moby Dick is all over the place” (70). The White Whale’s ubiquity and enormous size lend the impression that he figuratively spans the entire ocean.

The two beasts’ encounters with their rivals are also parallel. Ahab’s first encounter with Moby Dick is victorious in the sense

that he escapes with his life, but the whale gets the better of him by taking Ahab's leg. Likewise, in the castle of Utgarda-Loki, Thor is asked to prove his strength by lifting the giant's cat—the Midgard Serpent in disguise—but though Thor lifts the animal “as high up as the furthest he could,” the cat raises “just one paw” from the ground (Sturluson 43). Thor is technically defeated, but he is victorious in his ability to lift the serpent (who encircles the entire world) at all. Another striking similarity between Ahab and Thor is found in Thor's third challenge: to wrestle with an old woman, Elli, whose name means “old age” (Sturluson 45). Thor fights valiantly but is brought to one knee, which is unsurprising, as he has been fighting the personification of old age. Thor's fight with Elli shows his great power against natural forces, for it is a “great miracle” that he falls “no further than the knee of one leg” (Sturluson 45). Ahab loses one of his legs—at the knee—in his first battle with Moby Dick. He is thus brought to one knee. Like Thor, Ahab also asserts his authority over whales by crafting his peg leg out of “the polished bone of the sperm whale's jaw” (Melville 135). He is portrayed as a powerful captain and a good whale-hunter, but neither he nor Thor can ultimately stand against the impersonal forces of nature each man fights.

Incensed at their initial failures, both Ahab and Thor face their beastly enemies a second time and are again thwarted. After his defeat at the castle of Utgarda-Loki, Thor steals the giant Hymir's boat to chase the Midgard Serpent. Though Thor catches the beast, Hymir is frightened and cuts Thor's fishing line so that the serpent escapes (Sturluson 47). Thurin notes that Ahab also usurps a ship, the Pequod, for his revenge plot. He embarks as the whaling ship's captain under false pretenses, so that he can chase Moby Dick (70). Thor's attempt to capture the serpent from Hymir's boat is thwarted, and he must face the monster a third time at Ragnarok. Ahab's second confrontation with the White Whale aboard the Pequod is parallel to Thor's third encounter with the Midgard Serpent: both constitute the final encounter between god-man and beast. Thurin notes that the “end of the Pequod and Ahab, finally, is as apocalyptic as the end of Asgard and the Aesir” (70). Moreover,

the apocalyptic contexts of both pairs' final confrontations bear striking similarities.

Though Thor is never explicitly mentioned in *Moby-Dick*, Ahab's appearance and actions also bear a specific resemblance to the Norse god of thunder. The most obvious association of Ahab and thunder occurs in chapter 119, "The Candles," as the Pequod is hit by a bad storm. After a series of lightning flashes and "a volley of thunder peals," someone on the ship shouts, "Who's there?" (Melville 548). Thurin notes that Ahab replies, "Old Thunder!" (Melville 548), thus associating himself with Thor, the god of thunder (Thurin 70). The rest of this scene shows Ahab's fearless and unearthly connection with the lightning and thunder of the storm. He defiantly holds the metal links that are attached to the Pequod's lightning rod and shouts his rebellion against the "clear spirit of fire" (Melville 550). Yet Ahab calls the flames his "fiery father" and tells his men that the "white flame but lights the way to the White Whale" (Melville 551, 550). While light imagery is most prominent in this chapter, the lightning-induced flames are associated with thunder. The wind "hammers" (Melville 548) at the Pequod, wording that alludes to Thor's magical hammer Miöllnir. The chapters depicting the final chase are full of subtle references to hammers: The waves "hammered and hammered against the opposing bow" (Melville 617). At the end of the second day, "the sound of hammers, and the hum of the grindstone was heard till nearly daylight" (Melville 612). Ahab hears "the hammers in the broken boats," and "far other hammers seemed driving a nail into his heart" (Melville 619). Thurin notes that Ahab is also associated with Tashtego's hammer when *Moby Dick* sinks the Pequod, just as Thor dies wielding his magical hammer, Miöllnir, though Thurin does not discuss the implications of this association for Ahab's role in his own apocalyptic battle (71).

Both the destruction of the Pequod and Ragnarok are apocalyptic catastrophes that are foretold through prophecy. Fedallah foretells the circumstances of Ahab's death: Fedallah must die and Ahab must see "two hearses" before Ahab can die, and the captain's death will be by hemp (Melville 541). Ragnarok is foretold

in the eddic poem “Voluspá,” translated “The Seeress’s Prophecy.” In the poem, a seeress tells the god Odin that the final apocalyptic battle between the gods and the giants will be precipitated by the god Baldr’s death (“The Seeress’s Prophecy” 31). In the ensuing battle, Thor will kill the Midgard Serpent but will die as he walks away from its corpse: “nine steps Fiorgyn’s child takes, / with difficulty, from the serpent of whom scorn is never spoken” (“The Seeress’s Prophecy” 56). After these nine steps, the god of thunder “will fall to the ground dead from the poison the serpent will spit at him” (“The Seeress’s Prophecy” 54). A death precipitates both Thor’s death at Ragnarok and Ahab’s death amidst the destruction of the Pequod: Fedallah must die before Ahab can die, while Baldr’s death brings about Ragnarok. In addition, few survivors are left after each destructive battle, but those who do live provide a small ray of hope. Ishmael lives to tell Ahab’s tale, to immortalize both Ahab and Moby Dick in his story. Likewise, the humans Life and Leifthrasir survive the Norse apocalypse, for “from them shall grow mankind” (Sturluson 57). While Ahab’s and Thor’s apocalypses are similar in structure, however, the role each plays in his final battle differs.

The parallels between Ahab and Thor underscore the relative power and authority of each figure, as well as the mythical immensity of the role each takes on. The dissimilarities in each man’s final confrontation with his monstrous adversary, however, show Ahab’s inadequacy in filling that heroic role. Both Ahab and Thor are killed indirectly by their beastly rivals, but Ahab’s death is partly connected to his vanity in thinking he is capable of defeating Moby Dick. Thor dies from the poisonous spit of the Midgard Serpent after he has dealt the monster a killing blow with Miollnir. His attempt to defeat the serpent is successful; the cause of Thor’s death is not his own weakness but an inevitable result of the Midgard Serpent’s dangerous power. Ahab, on the other hand, does not succumb to natural forces with dignity; he is caught “round the neck” by the line of his own harpoon, which he shoots in desperation at Moby Dick (Melville 623). It is Ahab’s failed attempt at taming Moby Dick—one failed attempt of many,

after a three-day chase—that results in his demise. The most obvious difference between each apocalyptic confrontation is its outcome: though Thor dies, he kills the Midgard Serpent first; Ahab is killed by Moby Dick, but the whale lives on. Ahab’s death is pitiful; the line catches his neck as “voicelessly as Turkish mutes bowstring their victim” (Melville 623). Thor, the “glorious son of Earth” (“The Seeress’s Prophecy” 56), dies honorably in battle with a fearsome opponent whom he conquers first, but Ahab is a victim, not a hero. Ahab ultimately falls short of the heroic, god-like status to which he raises himself. He monomaniacally pursues Moby Dick in an attempt to assert his dominion over this embodiment of impersonal transcendent power, but he cannot accomplish his mission for revenge. Thor is also no match for the impersonal forces of nature, as seen in his inability to lift the Midgard Serpent or completely defeat Old Age. However, when put to the test, Thor succeeds far beyond most men and gods—he later kills the Midgard Serpent and is only brought to one knee by Old Age. Thor seeks revenge against his monstrous rival, but he has the god-like power to follow through on his threats. Ahab, despite his assertions of authority, is only mortal.

The role of the hammer in each apocalyptic confrontation elucidates Ahab’s tenuous relationship to his self-created identity as a heroic god-like figure. Thor’s hammer, Miöllnir, is a symbol of his might: the hammer is “well known to frost-giants and mountain-giants when it is raised aloft...it has smashed many a skull for their fathers and kinsmen” (Sturluson 22). This hammer is within Thor’s possession, a symbol of his mastery over his own power. In addition, Thor uses Miöllnir to strike the Midgard Serpent a lethal blow. The hammer in the final chapter of *Moby-Dick*, however, is in Tashtego’s possession. Ahab must call out orders to Tashtego: He is not in a position to wield the instrument himself. This parallel might be criticized because Ahab never intends to use the hammer against Moby Dick; a harpoon is his weapon of choice. However, he is also unable to wield his harpoon properly against Moby Dick—the line “ran foul” (Melville 623). Tashtego’s hammer is another kind of weapon against the White Whale. Thurin claims that “Tashtego

(and his hammer) becomes Ahab's final instrument and weapon as he helplessly watches his ship go down" (71). Ahab's last command is for Tashtego to nail a flag to the mast-head; he commands the harpooneer to use the hammer—a force of power and an allusion to Thor—to assert the Pequod's identity, and therefore his own. Thor uses his hammer for action, and succeeds in killing the Midgard Serpent; in light of this, Ahab's vicarious use of Tashtego's hammer to assert his own identity as his ship sinks and he faces almost certain doom seems pitiable.

Perhaps the Midgard Serpent is another one of the mythical beings that Franklin claims falls short in comparison to the White Whale, but the strength of the similarities between Ahab and Thor contribute a significant layer of depth to Ahab's characterization. Thor is humiliated by the Midgard Serpent and other natural forces—the ocean, old age—just as Ahab is bested by Moby Dick, who takes his leg. Both Ahab and Thor usurp a ship to pursue their revenge, but while the Norse god has the power to assert his authority over the natural force embodied in the Midgard Serpent, Ahab fails to enact his revenge against Moby Dick and brings about both his own death and the death of his crew. Ahab's god-sized ego, when contrasted with the mythical god of thunder, falls short of actual godhood. Ahab sets himself up as an authoritative figure, boldly asserting his decision to hunt the supernaturally powerful White Whale. He revolts against the natural creature that took his leg with the same rebellious spirit which causes him to curse the storm that hits the Pequod: "I own thy speechless, placeless power; but to the last gasp of my earthquake life will dispute its unconditional, unintegral mastery in me" (Melville 550). Against this impersonal force, Ahab claims, "a personality stands here...while I live, the queenly personality lives in me, and feels her royal rights" (Melville 551). However, despite Ahab's regal and imposing nature, he proves merely mortal in the end. His revenge quest, while admirable as a humanistic assertion of power, is profoundly tragic. He cannot fulfill the role of god.

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“The Horror of My Other Self”: Transformative Masochism and the Queerness of Sadism in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

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Desire is frequently defined in relationship to a limited binary opposition: normative versus non-normative. Although this division excludes the abundance of alternative—or queer—desires felt by individuals, it illuminates the way in which subjects define themselves in opposition to others. Yet binary relationships merely represent two points on a spectrum, with multiple opportunities of interrelationship and overlap to be identified and defined. The relationship between the One and the Other and between the masochist and the sadist are, therefore, open to an interpretation of fluidity as opposed to mutual exclusion, by which queer theory may be applied to that which defies strict definition. The ambiguity of desire in Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* invites a reading of the story through queer theory, and the violence enacted by Mr. Hyde provides an opportunity to examine the possible interrelationship between masochism and sadism. Through his projection of queer desires for violence onto the identity of Mr. Hyde and through the deferral of communication

through contractual letters, Dr. Henry Jekyll embodies the masochist-turned-sadist through both of his identities.

In *Coldness and Cruelty*, Gilles Deleuze describes the relationship between the worlds of masochism and sadism as containing “an irreducible dissymmetry,” but he also notes their capacity to overlap with one another (68). He explains that the masochist and the sadist “represent parallel worlds, each complete in itself, and it is both unnecessary and impossible for either to enter the other’s world” (68). Yet, he acknowledges that their “very opposition tends unfortunately to suggest possibilities of transformation, reversal and combination,” leading one to read the masochist, like Severin in Leopold von Sacher-Masoch’s *Venus in Furs*, as capable of transforming into a sadist (68). Although Deleuze’s project aims to disassemble the presumed singularity of sadomasochism as a concept into its necessarily separate parts, “Coldness and Cruelty” nonetheless demonstrates the possibility of transformation from one “perversion” into another, though the types of sadism and masochism adopted by one who has previously assumed the other position may not align perfectly with the identity of the other (133, 132). Deleuze explains:

It would therefore be difficult to say that sadism turns into masochism and vice versa; what we have in each case is a paradoxical by-product, a kind of sadism being the humorous outcome of masochism, and a kind of masochism the ironic outcome of sadism. But it is very doubtful whether the masochist’s sadism is the same as Sade’s, or the sadist’s masochism the same as Masoch’s. (39-40)

Thus, one may read the masochistic figure as capable of turning into a sadist, but his or her masochistic history may bring about a different form of the sadist than one might expect.

Deleuze theorizes that a primary quality of the masochist is his or her deferral or disavowal of pleasure. He explain that “waiting and suspense are essential characteristics of the masochistic experience” (70) and “the masochistic process of disavowal is so extensive that it affects sexual pleasure itself; pleasure is postponed for as long as possible and is thus disavowed. The masochist is

therefore able to deny the reality of pleasure at the very point of experiencing it. (33). If a masochist derives pleasure from the denial of pleasure, then he or she becomes masochistically bound to displacement as the primary replacement for the sex activity being denied—with the climax of this activity being indefinitely deferred unless the masochist leaves the realm of masochism altogether.

Deleuze writes:

The masochist waits for pleasure as something that is bound to be late, and expects pain as the condition that will finally ensure (both physically and morally) the advent of pleasure. He therefore postpones pleasure in expectation of the pain that will make gratification possible. (71)

A component of this essential masochistic displacement is the appearance of the deferral of power. The masochist receiving punishment must displace his own power (or capacity) to punish himself onto another to derive pleasure from the blows of the whip. Though, in doing so, he or she retains the power in the masochistic relationship, because the punisher is punishing only by order from or agreement with the masochist. He or she nonetheless initiates the physical act of punishment to be brought against them and encourages the use of violence because of the pleasure to be derived from it. Deleuze writes:

the victim speaks the language of the torturer he is to himself, with all the hypocrisy of the torturer [...] [He is] a victim in search of a torturer and who needs to educate, persuade and conclude an alliance with the torturer in order to realize the strangest of schemes. (17, 20)

Thus, the masochist may only receive pleasure from punishment, humiliation, or pain if someone else brings these acts against himself or herself—an important element of masochistic displacement.

In Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Dr. Jekyll serves as a masochistic figure, because he splits his identity—splits his concept of self into One and Other—by deferring his power. He states, "If each, I told myself, could be housed in separate identities, life would be relieved of all that was unbearable" (Stevenson 62). Through the "separation of these elements," Jekyll

is able to deny his desires for the non-normative, for violence, as external to his own identity, as pleasures of the Other to commit violence against the One (Stevenson 62). Jekyll describes the violent and yet ambiguous acts he experiences through Hyde as “undignified,” “secret pleasures” felt to be a “vicarious depravity” (Stevenson 67, 70, 67). In *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Jacques Derrida articulates a similar view of alterity within the self, which separates itself through deferral and violence. He writes:

The One guards against/keeps some of the other. It protects itself from the other, but, in the movement of this jealous violence, it comprises in itself, thus guarding it, the self-otherness or self-difference (the difference from within oneself) which makes it One. The ‘One differing, deferring from itself.’ The One as the Other. (author’s emphasis, Derrida 78)

Thus, Jekyll’s split is both a deferral and a violent act, demonstrating the singular embodiment of two identities: the masochist and the sadist. The fact that Jekyll divides himself through chemistry also demonstrates the violence of his split; Jekyll describes the effects of his chemical mixture as “the pangs of dissolution” (Stevenson 65). It is disturbing that he aims to alter the composition of both his body and of his mind to eliminate a part of himself, which he sees as defying the normative (Stevenson 63).

Through a reading of Julia Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, one may interpret this split as an act of abjection—a denial of that which derives from One but is not normative and, therefore, must be jettisoned onto an Other. She writes:

I experience abjection only if an Other has settled in place and stead of what will be “me.” [...] It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite. (Kristeva 10, 4)

Jekyll enacts this abjection of his Other, Hyde, through his initial desire to divide his identity, but he is continuously haunted by “the horror of [his] other self” (Stevenson 76). Nonetheless, this split

allows Jekyll to use his “power of projecting” to reject his queer desires without devaluing or ceasing them (Stevenson 69). He explains, “it came about that I concealed my pleasures; and that when I reached years of reflection, and began to look round me and take stock of my progress and position in the world, I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life” (Stevenson 61). Deleuze describes the importance of projection as a component of masochistic activity: “since masochism implies a passive stage (‘I am punished, I am beaten’), we must infer the existence in masochism of a particular mechanism of projection through which an external agent is made to assume the role of the subject” (105-6). By splitting his identity and projecting his desire for violence, Jekyll initiates the masochistic relationship with his Other—Hyde.

The doctor’s division of himself into Jekyll (One) and Hyde (Other) also signifies the fluidity of the One-Other relationship—one is always at risk of becoming One or Other depending on the context one utilizes to define the self. “[E]ven if I could rightly be said to be either,” Jekyll writes, “it was only because I was radically both” (Stevenson 62). In other words, one is always at risk of becoming Other through the enactment or experience of queer desires. In “Queering the Self: Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,” Donald E. Hall notes:

The tale suggests rather emphatically that there may be ‘something queer about’ all of us (Dr. Jekyll 68), that we all live in some form and fashion on ‘Queer Street’ (33). (133)

The abject figure of Mr. Hyde becomes the Other identity through which Jekyll’s queer desires become acts of violence. Identifying Hyde as the figure of the sadist, Jekyll describes his other self as “drinking pleasure with bestial avidity from any degree of torture to another” (Stevenson 67). Hyde’s sadistic desire for violence is initially illustrated through Mr. Enfield’s retelling of the child-stomping story of murder: “the man trampled calmly over the child’s body and left her screaming on the ground. It sounds nothing to hear, but it was hellish to see. It wasn’t like a man; it was like some damned Juggernaut” (Stevenson 7). Later, Hyde is said to kill Sir Danvers Carew quite spontaneously:

Mr. Hyde broke out of all bounds and clubbed him to the earth. And next moment, with apelike fury, he was trampling his victim under foot and hailing down a storm of blows, under which the bones were audibly shattered and the body jumped upon the roadway. (Stevenson 25)

Readers are also provided an account of Hyde cruelly hitting a woman in the face for “offering, I think, a box of lights” (Stevenson 76). Through these acts, Hyde illuminates his sadistic drive, much like Wanda throughout much of *Venus in Furs*, and these acts of violence make both parts of himself—Jekyll (One) and Hyde (Other)—susceptible to sadistic tendencies. Hyde derives pleasure from the violence, which Jekyll may want to experience secondhand and which also leads him to feelings of guilt and the need for punishment that results from such. Jekyll receives pleasure through the “innocent freedom of the soul” that he feels when Hyde performs his queer and violent activities (Stevenson 64).

Deleuze analyzes another element of the masochistic theater that structures the relationship between the masochist and his or her punisher: the contract. He explains that love affairs, for Masoch, “must be regulated by contracts that formalize and verbalize the behavior of the partners. Everything must be stated, promised, announced and carefully described before being accomplished” (Deleuze 18). The intimacy, humiliation, or violence being brought against the masochist must be regulated by predetermined rules that have been agreed upon by both or all parties. Whether or not the contract is a physical piece of paper is less important than its determination of limits. If these limitations are transgressed, the results force the masochistic display into the separate-but-overlapping realm of the sadist—the arena of chaos and violence for its own sake (Deleuze 27). In addition to a regulatory structure bringing the realm of the law into the realm of sex, the contract may also be read as a deferral in itself, especially when the contract is written rather than spoken. By defining the limitations that surround that which will bring pleasure and the transgressions that are not to be permitted, the masochist and his or her punisher initiate the first act of deferral by discussing rather than enacting punishments.

When the contract takes the form of a physical object, to be read by one party in the absence of another, there is an additional aspect of deferral at work—the deferral of contact, of physicality, of presence. This final form of deferral is particularly relevant to the use of letters, which appear in both *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Venus in Furs*.

In Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs*, the contract serves as the element of mediation between Severin and Wanda, defining the punishments to be allowed by both parties (Sacher-Masoch 220). Additionally, the letter Wanda writes to Severin serves as an act of deferral. When Wanda writes to Severin, she explains that she will not see him for a while and that he must be her slave when she sees him. This letter performs a double displacement, allowing Wanda to defer her orders both temporally and orally onto a delayed, graphic form. She writes, "I do not wish to see you today or tomorrow, only the evening of the day after, and then as my slave" (Sacher-Masoch 184). The absence of his mistress causes Severin to desire her more, and Wanda may desire to punish Severin more for her own absence. Escaping to the mountains to wait until he can see her, Severin narrates that, after her letter, he is "above all in love," and Wanda greets him with the exclamation "Slave!" (Sacher-Masoch 184, 185).

In *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the letters from Jekyll to Lanyon and to Utterson demonstrate the masochistic desire for deferral. Jekyll's letters outline a list of guidelines for Lanyon and Utterson to follow to discover and humiliate Jekyll by exposing his dual identity and the violence committed by one-half of him (Stevenson 51, 54). Yet he frames this plotted discovery as an alliance and a salvation: "if you will but punctually serve me, my troubles will roll away like a story that is told. Serve me, my dear Lanyon, and save" (Stevenson 54). By giving orders to Lanyon and Utterson, the letters serve as significations of deferral and as contracts obliging the friends to follow the rules exactly as the doctor lays them out and not to exceed these regulations. The letters also expose the queerness of Jekyll's secret activities enacted through the identity of Hyde. Considering that Jekyll's initial intention in splitting his identity is to deny the

non-normative part of himself—to deny his queer desires—the letters ask both Lanyon and Utterson to expose this perhaps humiliating secret. As Deleuze argues, for the masochist, “pain, punishment or humiliation are necessary prerequisites to obtaining gratification” (Deleuze 71). Jekyll’s masochistic deferral of power through yet another form—letters—extends and expands the Jekyll-Hyde, One-Other, binary captured in one body to include external bodies that help to fulfill masochistic desires. Hall explains:

[A]s easy as it has been for critics to see the tale as structured thematically around the binary of Jekyll/Hyde, we might explore queerly what happens when we replace ‘Jekyll’ with ‘Utterson’ in that hierarchized binary, and conflate Jekyll-and-Hyde into the same person (for they are, of course). (137-38)

The placement of Jekyll’s letters towards the end of the story displaces his voice from the reader and displaces the normative desires accepted by him in the identity of Jekyll.

In addition to his indeterminate desires, which are described ambiguously and only in terms of violence, as Andrew Butler indicates in “Proto-Sf/Proto-Queer: The Strange Cases of Dr. Frankenstein and Mr. Hyde,” Hyde’s shape also inspires a queer reading of the text (Butler 13, Hall 140). His physical appearance escapes description by several of the story’s characters, and attempts to describe him depict a queer individual whose deformity escapes illustration (Stevenson 11). Attempting to explain Hyde’s appearance to Utterson, Enfield describes:

He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn’t specify the point. He’s an extraordinary looking man, and yet I really can name nothing out of the way. No, sir; I can make no hand of it; I can’t describe him. And it’s not want of memory; for I declare I see him this moment. (Stevenson 10-11)

Later, Poole describes him as a “queer” gentleman that leaves an impression of heartlessness (Stevenson 46). In “Prosthetic Performativity: Deleuzian Connections and Queer Corporealities,” Margrit Shildrick contextualizes the concept of deformity within

the field of queer theory, arguing that disabled bodies defy normative/non-normative binaries, thus “expos[ing] the queerness of all sexuality” (128). Disability studies, she explains, also calls into question the notion of the self and the other as fixed entities embodied: “the corporeality of disability is not that of an other fixed in a binary relation to the normatively embodied self, but is already queer in its contestation of the very separation of self and other” (Shildrick 127). Thus, Dr. Jekyll and the other part of himself, Mr. Hyde, embody queerness in part by defying description with their physical appearance, perceived as deformity, and by demonstrating non-normative desires for violence.

Possessing an indefinable queerness through his identity as Mr. Hyde, Dr. Henry Jekyll embodies the balance between normative and queer, between One and Other, and between the masochist and the sadist by utilizing projection, deferral, and contractual letters. By embodying two points on each of those spectrums of desire, by being simultaneously a part of the norm and outside of it, Jekyll defies normative desire and identity, but he projects his unconventional desires for violence onto the Other, the abject identity of Mr. Hyde. Creating a secret identity through which to live out his non-normative desires, Jekyll and his alternative personality illustrate the fluidity of masochism into sadism and vice versa, highlighting the interrelationship between these concepts as Deleuze addresses them while simultaneously calling into question the masochist’s need for another body outside of his or her own to receive pleasure by deferral.

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The Monster's Humanity: Racism and the Foreigner in *Frankenstein*

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As implicit commentary on the treatment of foreigners in the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* promotes the ideologies of empathy and understanding. As a fault of the social construct of the human mind, people often consider cultures with different social norms than their own as strange, uncivil, and often horrifying. Fearing the unknown causes human beings to consider people from different countries as a different species and not belonging to the human race. By crafting an artificial life form, Shelley creates the most unnatural character that could possibly exist from humanity. Victor Frankenstein's monster behaves as the quintessential foreigner: he lives in isolation without a home, without a name, and he must create his life from nothing. Since the creature has the body of an adult aged male, he has the potential to represent an immigrant moving into a new country because the same descriptors could be given to immigrants as they start their lives over. Foreigners do not understand the customs, the languages, or the geographic landscapes of their new homes; the monster participates in the same mindset and the same activities. As a foreigner, Frankenstein's creature speaks with articulation and acts as the most developed character in *Frankenstein* because Shelley endeavors to portray a different image of the foreigner than a brutish imbecile without the capability of learning

and educating himself on civil society. Shelley makes the statement that society misunderstands outsiders because foreigners have the ability to adapt to cultures different from their own, and may even have the abilities to surpass those in the dominant culture in certain aspects of life as the monster displays.

Frankenstein's creature has no name, which is the first instance in which Shelley dehumanizes him, but the creature has positive characteristics that equal or surpass his creator's characteristics. As the creature develops, he becomes the best-spoken character with the most interesting personality. The two main characters in the novel, Frankenstein and his monster, are the most developed characters in the novel, but the reader has a more intimate relationship with the monster than they have with Victor. Unlike Frankenstein's unreasonable and shallow nature, the monster expresses his soul to the reader and allows the reader to empathize with him by explaining his story adjusting to the world throughout Volume II. The monster pleads to Victor and the reader to "listen to [him] and grant [him] thy compassion" (Shelley 69). Recounting his memories allows the reader to enter the creature's mind, so the reader may understand the monster better. Through this experience, the reader learns that the monster experiences fear and confusion over this world and his creation. He also questions his purpose in life, as all humans inquire, and did not intentionally murder Victor's brother. In comparison, Victor simply rants at the reader while expressing abundant amounts of self-pity by which he reveals no truths about himself and appears superficial and one-dimensional. Aside from his obsession to create the monster, Victor does not exert effort to find love, to pursue a different passion, or to live a good life; his whole life becomes consumed first by his creation and then by his obsession to destroy it. In contrast, the creature has hopes, dreams, and ambitions that he pursues with conviction, such as obtaining a companion to love and trying to find his place in the world. Therefore, between the two main characters in the novel, the monster is the most developed character in personality and thought.

In addition to the creature's more developed soul, he speaks in a formal register, using ornate language when communicating

informally with others, and with a more complex sentence structure than the other characters. To further compare the two main characters of *Frankenstein*, their first conversation occurs as follows:

“Devil!” I exclaimed, “do you dare approach me? And do not you fear the fierce vengeance of my arm wreaked on your miserable head? Begone, vile insect! Or rather stay, that I may trample you to dust! And, oh, that I could, with the extinction of your miserable existence, restore those victims whom you have so diabolically murdered!”

“I expected this reception,” said the daemon. “All men hate the wretched; how then must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things! Yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us...” (Shelley 68)

This dialogue between Victor and his creature exemplify both of their speaking styles. Victor uses short, exclamatory sentences and rhetorical questions to display his anger; he also uses petty insults such as “devil” and “vile insect” when referring to the creature. The word “diabolically” appears to be the highest level word Victor says in this passage. In contrast, the creature does not yell petty insults at Victor and uses a few elevated words such as “detest,” “spurn,” “dissoluble,” and “annihilation.” The creature displays his anger through his word choice while making a philosophical statement about mankind. He also speaks with a more complex syntax than Victor as shown by the use of the semicolon and the numerous commas. Victor’s sentences appear very short and simple and he reiterates the same point in various ways. Overall, the monster shows his intellect and articulate manner of communication while Victor displays his fickle nature and average rhetoric. The articulateness of the monster does not correspond with British stereotypes of foreigners.

In the nineteenth century, citizens of the United Kingdom exhibited signs of xenophobia, having a deep antipathy to foreigners (Porter 408). Citizens considered any aspect of life that differentiated from the British cultural norms awful, or at least less satisfactory. Traveling, although it became a popular pastime, caused the British

voyagers to despise and dispute the disgust they had in the strange, exotic places to which they traveled. In addition to a general dislike for different ways of living, the British feared nonconformity and distrusted unfamiliar, foreign people simply because the immigrants had previously lived in a country that was not the United Kingdom. Differences in behaviors and traditions were seen, by the British, as uncivilized (Porter 426).

In relation to Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Victor's creature looks foreign compared to the average British citizen. According to Zohreh Sullivan, "the Monster's deformity poses the colonial question of racial difference and is a cultural reminder of nineteenth-century anxieties about the proximity and fluidity of racial and sexual Otherness" (46). The creature looks and acts differently than the natural humans and becomes extremely disliked and distrusted primarily because of his exterior being. Instantly after giving life to the monster, Victor stares in terror at "his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shriveled complexion, and straight black lips" (Shelley 35). Most of Victor's distrust and detestation for the creature originates from his creation's appearance. Another example of this occurs after the creature expresses the hardships he endures and pleads Victor to make him a female companion. In response to this heartrending story, Victor thought, "His words had a strange effect upon me. I compassionated him and sometimes felt a wish to console him; but when I looked upon him, when I saw the filthy mass that moved and talked, my heart sickened, and my feelings were altered to those of horror and hatred" (Shelley 103). Following Victor's logic, the monster's physical appearance becomes the only aspect of the monster's being that Victor cannot accept. This prejudice develops the basis of the superficial argument Victor generates against the creature and switches his opinion of his creation from a scientific miracle to a monster.

To elaborate on the creature as a symbol of a foreigner, some literary critics have hypothesized various races that Frankenstein's monster could represent. Anne Mellor believes that Shelley intended Frankenstein's monster to represent the Mongolian race.

At the time Shelley was writing *Frankenstein*, Mellor states that the Mongolian or Asian race was stereotypically considered, by British citizens, to be “culturally stagnant... innately violent, barbaric, and destructive” (485). The creature exhibits these deleterious behaviors by seeking revenge on his negligent creator. Therefore, these similarities between the monster’s behavior and the stereotypes of the Mongolian race display the connection that the monster has with foreigner stereotypes. Whether or not Shelley meant for the monster to represent the Mongolian race is irrelevant because the monster only needs to represent a non-Caucasian race; the British citizens felt xenophobic against all non-European races regardless of their geographic location and culture. The monster represents all types of foreigners by being the most extreme foreign entity.

Despite the creature’s distinctive characteristics, some of his personal qualities, his ability to learn quickly and his compassionate nature, break the common stereotypes of outsiders. By providing the creature with positive personality traits and abilities, Shelley causes the reader to think differently about the monster. The creature’s compelling proposition to Victor, pleading for a companion of his species, is the turning point when the reader begins to feel sympathy for the monster. In correlation with the reader’s different opinion of the creature, the reader begins to think more critically of Victor and form the opinion that he does not take responsibility for his creation. Relaying the creature’s story allows the reader to understand his predicament and formulate their own opinion aside from Victor’s shallow disdain for his creation, which the reader begins to analyze as superficial. The creature shows the reader that he has a soul and qualities that make him human on the inside despite his unnatural physical form. In relation to race, the monster’s outer appearance is not that different from having black colored skin instead of white colored skin; it took many years for society to realize that skin color does not determine an individual’s humanity. According to Milton Millhauser, the monster is unlike a typical foreigner because he embodies “not an average but an extreme; the actual savage has his own commendable if elementary civilization that he can compare with ours, but

Frankenstein's monster has only the impulses of his nature—which are, to start with, absolutely good” (273). In other words, a foreigner has a background and culture to compare with his new one, but Frankenstein's creature does not have any previous existence to compare his world. The monster demonstrates elements of humanity by both craving desires of shelter and love, and thinking rationally, which is the aspect of life that separates humans from animals.

By the articulate way that the creature communicates, he demonstrates his intellect, reasoning abilities, and his compassionate nature. His ornate dialect likely originates from his exposure to language through literature such as “*Paradise Lost*, a volume of *Plutarch's Lives*, and the *Sorrows of the Werter*” (Shelley 89). Adopting the higher register of language makes the creature sound well-educated. William Brewer explains that the monster may have an alternative reason for his use of language because “when he overhears cottagers conversing with one another, he learns that relationships can have a linguistic basis” and desperately wants to form positive relationships with mankind (342). The creature pursues language in order to communicate well with humans. As Maureen McLane states, “the novel demonstrates, perhaps against itself, that the acquisition of ‘literary refinement’ fails to humanize the problematic body, the ever-unnamed monster” to the other characters (959). Literature and the acquirement of knowledge cannot connect the monster to the human race, which the creature realizes when he reflects upon the knowledge he gains and displays the critical thinking skills he acquires while debating his existence comparatively to mankind:

And what was I? Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant; but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property. I was, besides, endowed with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man. I was more agile than they and... my stature far exceeded their's. When I looked around there were none like me. Was I then a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled, and whom all men

disowned? I cannot describe to you the agony that these reflections inflicted upon me... (Shelley 83)

This passage from the monster demonstrates the monster's ability to intelligently reflect upon his situation as any human being would. Similar to a foreigner journeying to a new country, the monster does not have any possessions or friends and feels like he does not belong because he looks different than the majority of the people in society. The creature also worries whether or not society will accept him and his differences.

The only section in which a character demonstrates true compassion towards the monster occurs when he introduces himself to the old, blind Mr. De Lacey. Without the ability to see, Shelley prohibits the father from making any presuppositions about the creature based on his appearance, the most deplorable aspect of the creature's being. The father shows sympathy for the creature and offers his assistance because he is unaffected by prejudice towards the creature. De Lacey comforts the creature by saying that his friends will treat him well because "the hearts of men, when unprejudiced by any obvious self-interest, are full of brotherly love and charity" (Shelley 93). De Lacey exhibits the compassion about which he speaks until he becomes prejudiced towards the monster when his family returns home and provides insight into the monster's appearance. When the family enters their home, they are appalled by the monster and immediately abhor him. The mere sight of the monster provokes the following series of unfortunate circumstances:

Agatha fainted; and Safie, unable to attend to her friend, rushed out of the cottage. Felix darted forward, and with supernatural force tore me from his father, to whose knees I clung: in a transport of fury, he dashed me to the ground, and struck me violently with a stick. I could have torn him limb from limb, as the lion rends the antelope. But my heart sunk within me as with bitter sickness, and I refrained... (Shelley 94-95)

This scene shows the power of prejudice. Without the knowledge of the creature's physical appearance, De Lacey treats the monster

well and preaches wisdom of brotherly love. With the knowledge of the creature's appearance, De Lacey allows his son, Felix, to beat the creature he had moments before shown kindness. The monster displays no signs of barbarity, but the humans, who Shelley previously characterizes as being extremely compassionate people, cannot see past the physical body of the monster and react violently toward him. The monster's appearance is the sole stimulant for the ferocity.

Reading this passage enhances the reader's sympathy towards the monster because they see that these humans unjustly condemn him as ferocious based on assumptions of his appearance and not based on either his personality or actions. If the creature had adorned the appearance of a handsome, Caucasian male, then the family would not have reacted negatively toward him. They would have attempted to speak with him first and treated him with respect instead of with contempt. This exemplifies the argument Shelley builds in favor of the monster because the reader knows the monster's friendly intentions and that he "fit [himself] for an interview with them which would decide [his] fate... for the importance attached to its success inspired [him] with a dread lest [he] should fail" (Shelley 91). As his first attempt to interact with humans, this is a defining point of his life. The reader wants the experience to be pleasant for the monster, so he will not be alone anymore. The creature prepares himself well for this encounter and does not exhibit violent behavior, even after the assault, but the De Lacey family acts uncivil by immediately attacking the monster with no stimulator other than his ugliness. Despite the monster's efforts, they condemn him as evil based off of his appearance, the most illogical of prejudices.

Perceiving beyond the monster's physical appearance reveals the monster's humanity. Ironically, this idea questions the actual monster, or antagonist, of *Frankenstein*. The creature acts monstrously by committing acts of murder, but he is reacting to the idleness of his negligent creator. Other characters in the novel only think of the creature as a monster when they see him; otherwise, he displays characteristics of humanity by being a logical, thinking,

compassionate being. The characteristic of humanity that separates human beings from monsters and animals is the ability to reason about the world. If the monster may think reasonably and act with rational thoughts to seek revenge, another emotion typical of a sentient being, he represents the protagonist falsely accused as the antagonist. Interestingly, Shelley presents the creature to the reader by solely describing his appearance and then she describes his personality in the middle of the story after the reader has had enough time to develop a prejudice toward the monster. Once the reader gains insight into the mind of the monster by listening to his story, he or she abandons his or her judgments of the creature and begins to sympathize with him. Through the way she presents the monster, Shelley teaches readers to see through their prejudice by making them feel sympathy towards the monster to see their error in judgment.

Shelley embedded the need for cultural acceptance into *Frankenstein*. The creature is a victim of prejudice. In reaction to mankind's mistreatment, he enacts revenge on his creator while simultaneously showing the reader the cost of prejudice. The creature begins to act violently after he believes that he will never achieve camaraderie with human beings and Victor denies him the comfort of having a mate of his species. If humanity could accept the monster, the monster would not react in anguish against his solitary life. The horror of *Frankenstein* is the evil of prejudice and the terrors it may unfold.

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Music as Feminine Language in James Joyce's "The Dead"

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Despite its title, "The Dead" is hardly silent. Interwoven in the narrative is music, both melodies being played and discussions of the topic in general. The centrality of music to Joyce's short story parallels the mostly unacknowledged but equally central feminine presence in "The Dead." The music of "The Dead" creates a platform on which to base a discussion of the female presence in the story because both are persistently present while being reduced to background noise. According to Margaret Norris, "the status of female protest in the text [is] voiced, then silenced; sounded but rejected; there, but negated" (193). For Norris, female vocality is oppressed by the masculine authority of Gabriel and the narrator. However, in Joyce's "The Dead," music functions as the feminine language, a method of female expression that denies the omnipotence in masculinity.

In "The Dead," Joyce genders music as feminine in multiple ways, the first of which being that many of the women in the story are described based upon their musicality. During his dinner speech, Gabriel titles the Morkan women as "the Three Graces of the Dublin musical world" (44), and at the story's opening the narrator introduces them using their musical talents: Mary Jane "had been through the [Royal] Academy [of Music]," Julia "was still the leading soprano in Adam and Eve's," and Kate "gave music lessons to beginners" (22). Even women that are not necessarily musical are

described in the story using musical terms: “It was strange that [Gabriel’s] mother had had no musical talent though Aunt Kate used to call her the brains carrier of the Morkan family” (30). The narrator, echoing Gabriel’s consciousness, exposes the tension between masculine and feminine identifiers with this description of Gabriel’s mother. Suppose, for a moment, that intelligence (being a “brains carrier”) is considered a more masculine trait than feminine music. Male Gabriel believes that masculine intelligence should easily be able to master feminine music; however, Aunt Kate is aware that male intelligence does not inherently allow for an understanding or overpowering of feminine music. As will be proved later, male attempts to appropriate feminine music throughout “The Dead” are unsuccessful.

Additionally, Joyce presents music as feminine in the story by illustrating successful musicianship in female performance. Gabriel is apt in his description of the Morkan ladies as the “Three Graces of the Dublin musical world” because they truly are talented musicians; especially Julia and Mary Jane. Though Gabriel is not particularly appreciative or attentive to Mary Jane’s piano performance, the piece is one that requires technical precision because it was “her Academy piece, full of runs and difficult passages” (29). Mary Jane’s playing would have to be precise in order to execute such a song, which she seemingly did because “great applause greeted Mary Jane as . . . she escaped from the room” (30). Her performance is met with “great” applause and not the “polite” version that would presumably follow a mediocre performance. Gabriel does not like the piece because “it had not melody for him,” but this is because of his inability to understand feminine language, which is also evidenced by his interactions with women throughout “The Dead” (29). Though Mary Jane’s performance is good, it is eclipsed by Aunt Julia’s stunning rendition of *Arrayed for the Bridal*:

Her voice, strong and clear in tone, attacked with great spirit the runs which embellish the air and though she sang very rapidly she did not miss even the smallest of the grace notes. To follow the voice, without looking at the singer’s face, was to feel and share the excitement of swift and secure flight. (35)

According to Norris, this performance is clearly a triumph because “the narrator describes Julia Morkan’s singing with two extraordinary compliments. The first is technical. . . but the second is metaphorical and rapturous” (199). Evidently, music is truly an art when produced by women in Joyce’s story.

There are instances of male musicality in “The Dead,” but they either are poorly performed or are presented as “other” and, therefore, prevent music from being coded masculine. Joyce includes male musical performance near the end of the story with Mr. Bartell D’Arcy singing *The Lass of Aughrim*. However, the narrator notes that “the singer seemed uncertain both of his words and voice,” a voice that is “made plaintive by distance and by the singer’s hoarseness” (49). Mr. D’Arcy does not perform with the technical virtuosity displayed by any of the Miss Morkans earlier in the story. If music is feminine language, then it challenges masculine dominance, and denies the masculine the power to commandeer music for its own purposes. For Mr. D’Arcy, this purpose is the seduction of Miss O’Callaghan. Thus it is imperative for the proliferation of female vocality that the masculine performance of music fail. This failure is necessary for two reasons: to prevent the appropriation of music into masculine language and to thwart the seductive Miss O’Callaghan into the power of the male Mr. D’Arcy. If Mr. D’Arcy’s musical seduction is successful, then music becomes a tool by which women lose agency, rather than gain it. For women to have a voice, Mr. D’Arcy must fail. Freddy Malins executes the second example of male musicality during the story’s dinner scene. Freddy tells the assembled guests that “there was a negro chieftain singing in the second part of the Gaiety pantomime who had one of the finest tenor voices he had ever heard” (39). When the general consensus is that no one had heard (or cared to hear) this man’s performance, Freddy “sharply” questions, “And why couldn’t he have a voice too? . . . Is it because he’s only a black?” (40). His question is answered with silence, implying that the answer is yes, the tenor in the Gaiety pantomime should be silenced because he is black, because he is “other.” Framed for different circumstances, Freddy’s question could read, “And why couldn’t *she* have a voice too? Is it because she’s only

a woman?"

The reason the patriarchal society illustrated in "The Dead" attempts to stifle the female voice is because feminine vocality is dangerous to male dominance, so its expression as music is subjugated to forms of femininity in which masculine eminence is ensured. The creation of a feminine language, according to Luce Irigaray, is destabilizing because it would:

Cast phallocentrism, phallocratism, loose from its moorings
in order to return the masculine to its own language,
leaving open the possibility of a different language. Which
means that the masculine would no longer be "everything."
That it could no longer, all by itself define, circumscribe,
circumscribe, the properties of any thing and everything.
That the right to define every value—including the abusive
privilege of appropriation—would no longer belong to it.
(797-98)

Feminine language and music in "The Dead" threatens a hierarchy in which men, specifically Gabriel, are at the supreme rank. In order to prevent female empowerment, feminine musicality is, to some extent, suppressed in the story. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar explain that "modernist males seem to blame [women artists] for the destruction of (male) culture and defensively they destroy them along with their (female) culture" (526). At the beginning of "The Dead," the "feeble" Miss Kate Morkan finds usefulness in the form of giving music lessons using "the old square piano in the back room" (22). However, Kate's useful, and possibly "dangerous," musicality is quickly stifled by the "properly feminine" purpose of entertaining patriarchal Gabriel and the other guests: "On the closed square piano a pudding in a huge yellow dish lay in waiting and behind it were three squads of bottles" (38). Where the square piano once represented Kate's independence, by the time of the dinner party, it is nothing more than a side table.

Another instance of the stifling of the female voice in the story occurs directly after Julia's performance, when Kate complains about Julia's removal from the choir. Margaret Norris explains that Pope Pius X issued a document that ejected women from church choirs,

“a stunning historical instance of female exclusion from the practice of art on pure grounds of sexual discrimination” (198). Upset that after years of diligent service in the church choir, Julia was turned out, Kate argues:

I know all about the honor of God, Mary Jane, but I think it's not at all honorable for the pope to turn out the women out of the choirs that have slaved there all their lives and put little whippersnappers of boys over their heads. I suppose it is for the good of the Church if the pope does it, but it's not just, Mary Jane, and it's not right. . . . O, I don't question the pope's being right. I'm only a stupid old woman and I wouldn't presume to do such a thing. (36-37)

In this episode, there is a double suppression of the female voice because Kate describes the removal of female vocality from the Church, and she herself is censured and censored for her own renunciation of the pope's action. Her opinion is negated because she is “only a stupid old woman,” but she clearly has strong thoughts on the matter. In a disheartening move, though, Joyce has the correction of Kate's “inappropriate” behavior come from Mary Jane, indicating that the next generation of women has been formed into silent beings by the patriarchy. Jack Morgan clarifies, “Mary Jane's caution emphasizes the degree to which effective political resistance is precluded and ought not to be voiced” (135). Though music is a space for feminine vocality, the task of creating a feminine language fails if the female voice does not transition from the musical to the spoken.

Ostensibly, Gabriel Conroy is the main character of “The Dead,” but his inability to communicate with and understand the feminine language is problematic because he is constantly surrounded by women. Gabriel's inability to understand the feminine voice in music is demonstrated by his lack of appreciation for Mary Jane's piano recital at the dinner party (Joyce 29). Another conspicuous divide exists between Gabriel and his wife, Gretta. In the pivotal scene where Gretta listens to music on the stairwell, Gabriel thinks, “*Distant Music* he would wall the picture if he were a painter” (48). The title is apt, but not for the reason Gabriel thinks.

Gabriel chooses the title because he sees his wife listening to distant music, but because he himself is *not* listening, Gabriel fails to realize the she *is* the distant music. Gretta, as the feminine/musical object, is as distant from Gabriel as she will ever be because in that moment her thoughts are consumed entirely by another man, Michael Furey. Michael Furey is a fitting foil for Gabriel because Furey has done what Gabriel cannot: Michael Furey understood and, therefore, was able to use the female language (music) in order to speak to Gretta in a way which Gabriel has never mastered. Gabriel was apparently unaware of the divide between himself and women until that night, but Gretta's disclosure of her past is a revelation of himself as well: "His own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world: the solid world which these dead had one time reared and lived in was dissolving and dwindling" (59). Gabriel's sudden awareness of the divide between the masculine and feminine requires a re-structuring of his world, as his patriarchal perspective dissolves and dwindles, his identity requires a redefinition on more gender-equal terms.

It is interesting to note that while a reading of Joyce's "The Dead" supports a view of music as an empowering feminine voice, Director John Huston's film adaptation undercuts this argument. Huston reverses Joyce's characterizations of the Morkan sisters, making Julia (Cathleen Delany) the feebler of the two. This impacts the power of the feminine musical voice because it turns Julia's masterful performance into a plaintive gasp of musical notes. As a result, the strongest musical performance in the film is that of Mr. Bartell D'Arcy (Frank Paterson). Huston also portrays Mary Jane's (Ingrid Craigie) piano recital as boring as Gabriel considers it to be. Thus, if musical performance is only successful in the hands of a male in the film, it prevents the viewer from being able to perceive music a feminine, and the female voice, vocalized by music in Joyce's short story, is once again as "stifled" as Margaret Norris perceived.

James Joyce's "The Dead" is, on one level, the story of a dinner party in Dublin in 1904. "The Dead" is also concerned with Gabriel Conroy and his relationships with women. Though the story gives preeminence to Gabriel's perspective, the feminine often finds its voice through the outlet of music, a vocality for which the masculine

has no response. This feminine music is the first step to creating a female language that resists subordination to male dominance.

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Constructing and Demolishing Thomas Sutpen's Legacy: The Corrupting Influence of the Feminine on Masculine Reproduction in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*

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The Old Testament of the Christian Bible retells an account recorded in Hebrew religious literature of King David's son Absalom. Absalom had a design to usurp his father's kingship that failed horribly because of an unforeseen obstacle in his journey to the war field. "And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away" (King James Version 2 Sam. 18:9). Later a soldier in King David's army, Joab, would be informed of Absalom's whereabouts and take advantage of his vulnerable position by putting an end to the uprising: "And [Joab] took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak" (2 Sam. 18:14). As Absalom's plan is doomed to failure by an element that is out of his control, Thomas Sutpen's design in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* is doomed by the necessary incorporation of an uncontrollable factor into his design: the feminine. Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* represents the Sutpen family and plantation as a construction of and a reaction to egocentric patriarchal design.

According to Thomas Sutpen's design, the plantation and children are extensions of a masculine self. Sutpen's process for

creating a family mirrors his process for creating a plantation: “He had now come to town to find a wife exactly as he would have gone to the Memphis market to buy livestock or slaves” (Faulkner 39). There is no element of care, a philosophically feminine trait as opposed to the masculine trait of justice, within his configuration of the Sutpen family unit. The plantation and children occupy the same role in Sutpen’s design: propagation and preservation of patrilineal wealth and the production and perpetuation of the family authority. It is important to note that the masculine in this sense is not the laborer; after all, it is the female that endures the labor pains of creation. The earth births Sutpen’s plantation through labors of the feminine other. During Miss Rosa Coldfield’s narration, Quentin Compson perceives the creation of Thomas Sutpen’s plantation to be a type of natural conception and imagines Sutpen’s power, his ability to create the plantation out of “*Nothing*,” to be god-like:

Quentin seemed to watch [the wild blacks and the captive architect] overrun suddenly the hundred square miles of tranquil and astonished earth and drag house and formal gardens violently out of the soundless *Nothing* and clap them down like cards upon a table beneath the up-palm immobile and pontific [Thomas Sutpen], creating the Sutpen’s Hundred, the Be Sutpen’s Hundred like the oldentime Be Light. (Faulkner 4-5)

The plantation seems to be pulled from the earth by the extension of Sutpen’s masculine authority, not Sutpen himself. This type of authority is retained by the god of the Christian Bible who is always referred to as a masculine figure. Thus, Sutpen’s Hundred is a creation of the masculine maker through the labor of the feminine other. In the same respect, Sutpen’s children are birthed and reared by the woman. The role of the masculine maker in this dynamic is one of determining the productivity of the feminine other. Alia C. Y. Pan notes the goal of Sutpen’s design for his plantation:

The production of Sutpen’s Hundred is, in part, the production of the man himself, as Sutpen tries to solidify the plantation’s reach (in its control of labor, space, and

reproduction) by transforming the plantation into a symbolic representation of himself as a unified figure of power. (417)

Taking Pan's perspective a step further, the masculine maker's ability to shape the creation to the reflection of his authority is a representation of his virility. Sutpen's Hundred and Sutpen's children are extensions of his masculine authority through the labor of a feminized other: Ellen, Charles Bon's mother, slaves, or nature. Hence, Sutpen's characteristics are not only echoed through his plantation, but also through his children. However, Sutpen's masculine design is repeatedly corrupted in some way by the incorporation of the feminine. Because of the inherent necessity of the feminine for reproduction, Sutpen's objective can never be attained.

The objective of Sutpen's familial design is to secure a future for his masculine line, and in effect himself, that is defined by the production of a masculine copy of himself, a pragmatic heir worthy of authority. However, because of the requirement of the impure feminine in reproduction, Thomas Sutpen is never able to produce a viable, purely masculine regeneration of himself. The feminine continually disrupts Sutpen's design and keeps it from reaching its potential. For example, it is the feminine agenda that stifles Sutpen's design as pursued in New Orleans. Sutpen tells General Compson that the planter, whose part-black daughter Sutpen marries, was deliberately dishonest in withholding information about the young woman's race from Sutpen, which causes him to abandon his plan and begin again in Jefferson:

There had been not only reservation but actual misrepresentation on [the planter's] part...of such a crass nature as to have not only voided and frustrated without [Thomas Sutpen's] knowing it the central motivation of his entire design, but would have made an ironic delusion of all that he...could ever accomplish in the future toward that design. (Faulkner 267)

Though this type of "crass misrepresentation" does not recur, the Sutpen dynasty is inherently doomed to failure because of the feminine requirement which corrupts his design. The feminine

corrupts all of Sutpen's creations, but is most evident in Faulkner's representations of Sutpen's children.

All of Thomas Sutpen's children have some type of fundamental flaw aligned with the feminine that is cause for their abandonment or neglect. Judith Sutpen, the daughter of Thomas Sutpen and Ellen, is female and therefore inherently flawed like her half-sister Clytie. Begat by one of Sutpen's slave women, Clytie is Thomas Sutpen's daughter though never directly claimed as such, she possesses the Sutpen face according to Miss Rosa (Faulkner 27). She is female and part black, and therefore inherently flawed by two levels of the feminine. Yet, she is not the only child of Sutpen's that is partially black.

Charles Bon, the oldest son of Sutpen mothered by Sutpen's abandoned wife in New Orleans, has black blood like his mother. Shreve highlights the notion of the corrupt feminine when he narrates Bon's blood as being tainted by his mother's blood, in the voice of Bon himself: "*I...who have the blood after it was tainted and corrupt by whatever it was in Mother*" (Faulkner 336). This notion of Bon's "tainted and corrupt" blood is reiterated throughout Shreve's account of Bon. Charles Bon is not the only son of Sutpen, but retains a more masculine disposition than his white counterpart, Sutpen's preferred son, Henry.

Henry Sutpen, Thomas and Ellen Sutpen's son, is weak. Henry's weakness is perhaps most evident in Rosa's account of the atrocities that took place at Sutpen's Hundred:

. . . the spectators falling back to permit [Ellen] to see Henry plunge out from among the negroes who had been holding him, screaming and vomiting . . . I was not there to see the two Sutpen faces this time—once on Judith and once on the negro girl [Clytie] beside her—looking down through the square entrance to the loft. (Faulkner 26-27)

It is telling that Ellen is the person to find Henry being forced to watch the carnage in which his father participates. Through this maternal manifestation, Faulkner reinforces that Henry's reaction of "screaming and vomiting" is aligned with his mother and is therefore seated in his feminine traits. Likewise, Judith's and

Clytie's coldness is derived from their masculine traits evidenced by Faulkner's portrayal of their wearing an identical image of the Sutpen face. Because Henry is more emotionally defined by the Coldfield blood of Ellen, Thomas Sutpen considers him effeminate. It is this feminine side of Henry that makes him incapable of following in his father's footsteps; therefore negating Sutpen's design.

Since the role of the reproduced in Sutpen's family design is annulled by the feminine, he must continually seek new prospects to prove his virility and promote his authority. He attempted to copulate with Miss Rosa, then succeeded to do so with Wash Jones' granddaughter, Milly, which ultimately failed to satisfy his design as well considering the relationship resulted in the birth of a girl. Because Henry, the child that comes closest to fulfilling Sutpen's design, has no leadership abilities unless they are allocated to him, his acceptance and mimicking of Bon is the closest he can come to a direct mutiny against the authority of his father.

Representations of incest within the novel are symbolic of rebellion against the familial patriarchal structure. Karl F. Zender analyzes the implication of incest in the context of *Absalom, Absalom!*:

As this story emerges, the meaning of sibling incest reverses itself. The issue ceases to be whether Henry will serve his father's interests by preventing Charles from committing incest with Judith and becomes instead whether he will find some excuse . . . for defying his father and aligning himself with his brother. (750-51)

Because of Thomas Sutpen's disapproval of Charles Bon, any interaction with him is in effect a rebellion against the moral inclinations of the father and therefore a direct attempt to eliminate patriarchal authority. The epitome of mutiny would be to incorporate this "tainted" outsider into the family by allowing him to marry Judith. According to Shreve and Quentin, it is not the shared genetic traits that form Henry's problem with Bon and Judith's marriage which eventually culminates in Bon's murder, but instead the traits that are not shared, the feminine traits, Bon's black

blood.

Miscegenation adds another layer to the corrupt feminine by ushering in the barbarous black, yet another other. In Quentin and Shreve's version of the Sutpen Myth, it is the miscegenation, through Bon's potential marriage to Judith, which ultimately causes Henry to reluctantly kill Bon and in turn negate the familial structure that promotes Sutpen's design. Peter Ramos asserts this point: "Henry Sutpen kills Charles Bon, his own brother, in order to prevent Bon from marrying his (Henry's) sister, Judith. Henry's motive for doing this is to prevent not incest but miscegenation" (53). Ramos goes on to elucidate the implications of such fratricide in the antebellum American South that relies on slavery for economic growth but can claim no biological ties to slaves (54). Slaves are viewed as subservient animals. The definition of sex, from this view, takes on the connotation of bestiality. Because of the corrupting action of the feminine on patriarchal recreation within Sutpen's design, the only results of Sutpen's existence that actually achieve the goal of his design—permanence—are the narratives that are born from the failure of his familial design.

Erica Plouffe Lazure proposes that Rosa achieves her goal of motherhood through her formation of the Sutpen narrative:

Perhaps in this sub rosa loam of Rosa's isolated but lively mind, we hear the expression of the 'very damp and velvet silence of the womb' (Faulkner 116). From this space she expounds the words that transform her from 'the man which [she] perhaps ought to be' (116) to the woman—the mother—that she had always desired to be. (481)

In Lazure's reading, Rosa Coldfield is a literary mother giving birth to Sutpen's demonic tale; she asserts that the imagery prevalent in Rosa's account of the Sutpen myth is filled with references to umbilical chords, wombs, and tropes for regeneration (483). Sutpen's gross failure to copulate with Rosa Coldfield impregnates her with the emotional seed of narrative voice. She is influenced by her emotions toward Sutpen's surprising proposal, but Rosa's is the only narrative that provides any sense of emotion.

Though she may be bitter and angry, she is the only storyteller

who has witnessed these events as they occurred before her very eyes, except in a few cases when Rosa makes it clear that she did not see a particular person or event: "But I was not there. I was not there to see the two Sutpen faces this time" (Faulkner 27). Even Shreve realizes the necessity of incorporating the emotion in Rosa's telling of the Sutpen Myth into its final formulation by compulsively inserting Miss Rosa's depiction of Thomas Sutpen into Quentin's narration: "'his—' ('the demon's,' Shreve said) '—destiny . . .'" (Faulkner 250). Likewise, Shreve seems to insert the lacking feminine aspects into Quentin's story while learning it:—"('It's a girl,' Shreve said. 'Don't tell me. Just go on.')"— (Faulkner 251). The emotionality of Rosa's story clearly represents the feminine in the Sutpen Myth inserted into Sutpen's fatalistic masculine autobiography that is handed down through three generations of the Compson family.

Thomas Sutpen unintentionally develops a genealogy of selected story tellers patrilineally through General Compson's line culminating with the interjection of the feminine through Shreve's interjection of emotionality born from Miss Rosa's narration. Faulkner's use of Thomas Sutpen's autobiography as related to General Compson lays the groundwork for creating a purely masculine line of narrative heredity hence eliminating the corrupt feminine. Women have a function; men have an authoritative brotherhood. Sutpen attempts to purify his narrative ideology by passing it through a respectable and respected man's, General Compson's, masculine line. Since women cannot fully grasp a man's rationality, the feminine would corrupt the story in translation. Sutpen is driven naturally by companionship to tell Quentin's grandfather his story during the hunting trip: trips which Faulkner uses to create masculine bonds. With Sutpen's emphasis on masculinity, this type of companionship is more valuable than marriage because of its masculine purity and the absence of the corrupt feminine. As John T. Matthews argues in *The Play of Faulkner's Language*, General Compson is not an object in Sutpen's plan; he is a like-minded ally espoused by Sutpen through the marriage of the speaker and the hearer.

This marriage of manhood drives Sutpen to recount his life story, a reproductive need that comes to serve the purpose that his design could not, permanence. Before Sutpen relates his autobiography to General Compson on the hunting trip, Quentin divulges Sutpen's motivation for telling the story:

All of a sudden he discovered not what he wanted to do but what he just had to do, had to do it whether he wanted to or not, because if he did not do it he knew that he could never live with himself for the rest of his life, never live with what all the men and women that had died to make him had left inside of him for him to pass on. (Faulkner 224)

Yet, there is something missing from Sutpen's autobiography in Quentin's opinion: "He went to the West Indies . . . That was how he said it: not . . . how he liked the sea nor about the hardships of a sailor's life" (Faulkner 244). The Sutpen story cannot become The Sutpen Myth until Rosa's literary hate-filled lovechild—her narrative—marries Thomas Sutpen's dictatorial design through its conception seeded in the intercourse of Shreve's and Quentin's fertile imaginations. Christopher J. Cunningham concludes that the relationship between Shreve and Quentin, while reproducing the Sutpen myth, has strong suggestions of biological reproduction including but not limited to "Shreve's (phallic) pipe, upon which he pulls throughout the evening, at one point 'overturning a scattering of white ashes'" (568). Once gestation is complete, the myth's birth is inescapable.

The Sutpen's masculine design is doomed to failure by its dependence on and rejection of an uncontrollable influence: the feminine. The feminine is an element that is essential for reproduction, but, contrary to the will of Thomas Sutpen, it is also influential in determining the characteristics of the reproduced. Purely masculine regeneration is simply not possible; the feminine characteristics of the reproduced cannot be eliminated or made to conform to any type of purely masculine design. Thus, Sutpen's masculine permanence can only be attained by creating a literary reproduction of himself. Though Shreve and Quentin allow the feminine to provide depth to the narration, it is born from a

female, Miss Rosa, whose only femininity is seated in her literary conception. Therefore, the Sutpen Myth as a literary reproduction has the opportunity to retain its masculinity and provide a permanent tribute to the Sutpen name. Due to the lack of a masculine heir, Absalom, the son of King David, also created a tribute to himself:

Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up a pillar, which is in the king's dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place. (2 Sam. 18:18)

Like Absalom's place, the Sutpen Myth becomes a memorial to the man and a place where the ghosts of the Sutpen dynasty remain unto this day. Faulkner proves the permanence of the narration's rebirth and growth through Shreve's retelling of the Sutpen Legacy.

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Deceptive Detective: Trickster's Reappearance in the Capitalist World of *The Maltese Falcon*

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The capitalist society of 1920s America welcomed fierce competition, extreme financial gain, and brutal industrialism. Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* appeared in the heart of this uncertain society, and its thick social undertones reflect its culture of origin. Leonard Cassuto states that the novel "shows a remarkable prescience about the disaster to come [the Great Depression] and a breadth of vision taking in the sweeping socioeconomic changes of the previous decade" (33). It is clear that the novel itself beamed as a strong social presence, however, even greater significance lies in the novel's main character, private detective Sam Spade. Spade clearly displays characteristics of the mythical trickster archetype, and, in fact, Spade can be viewed as a trickster figure, a misfit who, through challenging societal norms, seeks to reshape his world, prompting Americans to question the state and direction of their current social structures. Trickster is a universal mythical figure who has appeared as a cultural transformer since ancient times. His function is especially essential as cultures undergo shifts because he allows narrow beliefs to be questioned and reshaped as these changes occur, helping to eliminate confining social constructions and provoking social change when it is most necessary. Thus, it

is not a surprise to encounter trickster's reappearance in a newly industrialized America, the society which trickster theorist Lewis Hyde calls trickster's "apotheosis," "the land of rootless wanderers and the free market, the land not of native but of immigrants, the shameless land where anyone can say anything at anytime, the land of opportunity and therefore opportunists, the land where individuals are allowed and even encouraged to act without regard to community" (11). From this unstable society also arose a power struggle, inviting Spade to enter and invoke social progress, becoming what Gail Jones describes as "[t]he transforming, transcending trickster [who] operates along boundaries, borders in flux" (110). When Marxist and Trickster theories are used simultaneously as a single lens through which to view Spade, it becomes clear that he functions equally as Marxist activist and trickster, elucidating that these two concepts are one in the same social revolution.

Merely considering Sam Spade's name, one begins to question his seemingly incredible detecting abilities; he is certainly able to dig and uncover the realities of a given case. As a trickster figure, however, Spade's function is not exactly to uncover the sole truth, but rather to call his society's accepted truths, worldviews, and ideologies into question. The unique shape shifting abilities that he possesses as a trickster figure allow him to sliver through numerous perspectives, compiling versions of truth that will allow him to solve his case. Though it cannot be said that any final truth is ever uncovered, it is in this very uncertainty that significance lies. Working primarily through the little information and trust provided to him, Spade accepts and uses versions of truth to accomplish this function, and, in turn, exemplifies truth's subjectivity and arbitrariness.

As a shapeshifting trickster, Spade is polytropic—"known for changing [his] skin"—in order to appear friendly and allied with everyone he encounters (Hyde 51). Regardless of whom he is dealing with, Spade has a method of maintaining ambiguity when accepting others' stories. This apparently objective stance allows him to act as an intercessor between all parties—he simply changes skins, never

taking a single side. As William Hynes points out in his essay, "Mapping Mythic Tricksters," "[a]s a shape-shifter, the trickster can alter his shape or bodily appearance in order to facilitate deception" (36). Through taking on many different shapes, Spade refuses to accept any single stance. When asked whom he represents, he admits, "[t]here's me" (106). This type of neutral shape-shifting becomes a disguise through which he gains a bit of everyone's trust and manipulates through versions of the truth. When Spade meets his first client, Brigid O'Shaughnessy, he appears calm despite her nervous and insistent mannerisms. He listens nonchalantly, "smil[ing] and nodd[ing] as if he underst[ands] her" (5). Trickster Spade adopts an identical know-nothing persona throughout the scene in which he initially meets Joel Cairo, another client on the quest for the Maltese falcon. While keeping a poker face, he disguises his affiliations and shifts shapes to gain Cairo's truth. Consequently, "[t]he amiable negligence of his tone, the motion in his chair, were precisely as they had been when he had addressed the same question to Brigid O'Shaughnessy on the previous day" (43).

With similar ambiguity, like any trickster, Spade cleverly works within the gray area between truth and lie and uses this neutral area to point out inherent problems with binary distinctions of right and wrong. According to Hyde, "[t]he thieving and the lying that initiate the trip into this inky territory give trickster the chance to remake the truth on his own terms . . . [a]t the appropriate moment he turns on the charm" (73). In Spade's case, this means carefully constructing and maintaining his outsider position, much of the time through half-truths and many faces, in order to rewrite the story of the Maltese falcon, more fully revealed later, outside any one perspective. Because he is not confined to one socially influenced instinct or shape, he is without the boundaries of movement that such an instinct would create, promoting a higher, purer form of intelligence. Since Spade's intelligence is removed from the staunch ideology of those around him, he can use this outsider intelligence to reveal his society's detrimental worldviews. As Hyde states, "Having no way, trickster can have many ways. Having no way, he is dependent on others whose manner he exploits, but he

is not confined to their manner” (45). Spade exploits the “manner” of everyone around him, attacking the ideology of the police, his clients, and his larger society.

Closely related to his calling the notion of single truth into question is Spade’s overt questioning of the superstructure and its dominant discourse. In order for capitalism to function, other systems of economic thought must be dismissed. Within his fictional world of sleuthing, Spade provides a voice for the silenced and calls his audience’s attention to the importance of accepting multivocality. Because they seek wealth through means of their own outside the system, Brigid, Cairo, and Gutman would normally be excluded from society and their methods of acquiring wealth dismissed. However, in dealing with and accepting these people as clients, he brings another discourse, that of the socially excluded, to the forefront. In addition, as a trickster, Spade levels society’s playing field by working with the “dirt” of society, or those normally recognized as mere outsiders. He also, however, works carefully with the police. In this way, trickster Spade is acting as, in the words of Hyde, “the god of the hinge” (209). In other words, this position of mobility as a hinge between the police and his clients allows him to find a loophole through which to completely rework everyone’s system of thought. Hyde describes the need for this loophole in a way relatable to both the guardedness of the criminals and the closed mindedness of the police: “few groups go out of their way to embrace something marginal or foreign . . . [a]ll cultures guard their essences” (209). As Spade plays the line between the competing discourses of his clients and the police, he ultimately generates possibilities to rework epistemology.

The arbitrariness of a single truth becomes increasingly evident on two occasions in which Spade discusses with Brigid which versions of her story will be revealed to the police. He has been carefully choosing his words when conversing with the police so as to cause as little disruption as possible. He tells her, “I thought maybe we wouldn’t have to tell them all of it. We ought to be able to fake a story that will rock them to sleep, if necessary” (34). Clearly, Spade is unconcerned with telling the police the truth; he simply

needs to gain enough trust on either side to gain an entry into the general sphere of social change. Spade also knows that “[t]he newspapers will print it whether they believe it or not” (78-79).

These darkly comical moments carry with them strong undertones of social protest. They also hint at another accepted truth Spade mocks, that which is reinforced by the superstructure. Not only is Spade working on a hinge, but through his nonchalant sarcasm, Spade is using his client’s information to make a joke of the public’s willingness to accept whatever is provided to them from the public sphere. He is digging into his audience’s deeply rooted ideology about the ways in which society should function. Proposing the idea that societal sources, whether newspaper accounts or police reports, held sacred to those who consume them, are not to be trusted as “good” or “true,” is uncomfortable to say the least. But, as Hynes claims, “[n]o order is too rooted, no taboo too sacred . . . that it cannot be broached” (37). In this case, Spade is broaching trust of the media and the police as primary components of the sacred superstructure. As long as the public believes that criminals are being kept at bay by their law enforcement, they will remain comfortable with the superstructure’s efficacy and authority. However, these legal and journalistic sources, a manifestation of bourgeoisie ideology, are in place to serve and preserve the larger system that Spade heaves into question. Here Spade points out the lack of security in a single ideological voice. As a trickster, he enjoys working with the truths of criminals in order to mock the accepted single discourse of the law.

As hinted previously, humor, even to the point of proving the legal system a joke, is an agent through which Spade brings the superstructure into question. By combining what trickster theorist Sacvan Bercovitch calls trickster’s “American slant,” with his role as a detective, Spade creates a humor that causes “the listener who believes and marvels at the exploit” (54). Bercovitch proceeds to explain that “tricksters steal their weapons of ludic resistance . . . from social institutions—institutions that are first and foremost centers of social control” (63). Spade is working through society’s weak ideological joints, specifically the message that the law should

always be trusted. Spade uses the police themselves to call their work, purpose, and interpretation into question. The first time he is questioned after the murder of his partner, Miles, Spade immediately suggests the police's incompetency. He recognizes the Lieutenant's secret society pin on his uniform and they toast (during the Prohibition era) "[s]uccess to crime" (19). During an encounter with the district attorney, Spade wittily laughs at the gaps in the law's work. The district attorney tries to agree with Spade in laughing at the police's ridiculous murder theories and producing his own, but Spade nonchalantly overrides his arrogantly presented ideas. Readers begin to believe the district attorney's story as he hints that the murderer is Spade's client. However, as he proceeds to attempt to tie the murders to a big name gambler, he tragically fails to recognize corruption within his own precinct. Spade laughs at the theory, remarking, "[O]r . . . he died of old age. You folks aren't serious, are you?" (148). The district attorney is dumbfounded, yet still refuses to abandon his theory. Here Spade is not only demonstrating the need to be open minded, but also jokes of the legal system's ignorance.

Though Spade's questioning of the legal system's solitary discourse is indeed effective, the trickster goes a step further to also allow his audience to question his client's actions as well. As a Marxist trickster, Spade ultimately encourages a complete social revolution. He must use all pieces of the system, including the excluded, to accomplish this. Accordingly, though his clients' selfish behavior could be seen as a fitting rebellion within alienating capitalist system, it is destructive, and it is merely another reason Spade must call the system's entirety into question. It is ultimately necessary for a trickster figure such as Spade, who has to this point muddied boundaries and brought truth itself into question, to transform ideas about wealth itself in order to provoke social progress.

Placing this idea of arbitrary wealth into context, it is helpful to first consider the falcon itself and its raising questions about wealth's distribution. All of Spade's clients—that is, Brigid, Cairo, and Gutman—have selfish motivations for obtaining the falcon,

and it is also obvious that they are willing to go to great lengths to possess the falcon. Because they place deep trust in the falcon's value, their selfishness dangerously manifests itself in lies, distrust, greed, and murder. Spade, however, once again places himself as an outside observer to expose this. During Spade's first encounter with Cairo, he is offered \$5,000 to obtain the falcon and return it safely to Cairo, who will then return it to its "owner" (49). Spade accepts a \$200 retainer, but begins a questioning of ownership itself when he speaks "mildly and ambiguously," asking, "What sort of proof can you give me that your man is the owner?" (50). This question is monumental, symbolic of much larger questions within Spade's society. First of all, to whom does wealth belong? All of his clients claim the falcon as their own; who is to say that they are not all entitled to it?

Furthermore, Spade's work during the final circumstances of the novel asks a deeper philosophical question: what is the nature of this wealth that everyone is chasing? To this point, Spade has encouraged the questioning of numerous beliefs and injustices within his given system, but he now functions to prove the artificiality of wealth itself, the very object that the entire complex machine of capitalism operates to serve. The circumstances in the final chapters of the novel, manipulated by Spade, prove Robert Shulman's statement that "the unstable marketplace society of trading and deception is itself a world of appearances" (407). The capitalist system deceptively causes wealth to appear as meaningful, a goal and purpose to work towards. However, trickster Spade's work of proving wealth itself arbitrary is the ultimate unexpected, the utmost situation inversion. Spade proves that the only value existing in any given object, in this case the Maltese falcon, is that assigned by its consumer. As the novel concludes, the mythical falcon that Spade has obtained for his clients is proven to be fake, a mere impersonation. The falcon's value serves as a metaphor for the larger economic system—fake, phony, meaningless. Spade receives an offer from his clients to continue on their material quest for the Maltese falcon. He refuses, thereby rejecting the greed and distrust involved with chasing the façade of wealth and material gain. He takes \$1,000

payment for his work: a modest amount compared to the millions his clients are hoping to obtain from the falcon's retrieval. When this is accomplished, Spade's audience can see that a distribution of wealth is meaningless except to the extent that it provides people with goods necessary for survival.

Also in his refusal, Spade functions as a detective whose purpose is solely to detect social issues. Hyde speaks of this type of trickster as one with "no way of [his] own, only the many ways of [his] shifting skins and changing contexts" (54). Spade's sole purpose is his unique tricksterism, not his own self-interest. Chiefly, Spade serves to show rejection of competitive capitalism and emphasize the meaninglessness of wealth and power. He proceeds to return to his everyday life and work, leaving the audience to consider and transform the issues he has pointed out within their society.

Spade becomes a trickster who leaves the completion of his revolutionary ideas to the society he has impacted. He has served as a prophet, and as Hyde explains about open-ended trickster tales, "the reading is ours, for the messenger himself left without delivering any message" (287). Spade does, however, bring with him the message that there must be a method through which to modify the economic system that neither the bourgeoisie nor the proletariat has yet to discover. From a Marxist perspective, Spade's ideas would ideally serve to arouse a proletariat revolt, in hopes that the boundaries he has blurred will lead to unified resistance. Regardless of whether radical social change happens immediately, Spade's questions about the meaning and value of wealth itself provoke priceless contemplation among his audience. He is a timeless trickster, and as radical social change has yet to occur as of today's America, Spade becomes a trickster hero whose ideas and exploitations in the world of the novel transcend time's limitations. Perhaps it is time to dust off the trickster and welcome his abilities to investigate methods of social transformation.

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Jurors

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