

CALLIOPE



California State University,
Bakersfield
Department of English

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Department of English

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Guidelines for Contributors

Contributions in all areas of literary criticism are warmly welcomed. Essays must have the recommendations of a professor. Submission of a paper to this journal will be taken to imply that it represents original work. Essays should conform to the current MLA or APA documentation styles. The editors reserve the right to edit submissions as needed for publication.

Submission instructions and guidelines can be found on the university website, English Department's homepage: <http://www.csub.edu/english/Calliope%201/index.html>.

All correspondence concerning editorial matters – inquiries regarding suitable topics, length of manuscripts, reviews, etc. – should be sent directly to the editor:

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Introduction

This is the fourteenth issue of *Calliope*, the annual publication that generally features some of the best work in literary theory, criticism, and culture produced by undergraduates and graduates in the Department of English at California State University, Bakersfield.

The issue includes fifteen original essays covering a wide range of literature from William Shakespeare and Charlotte Brontë to Edwidge Danticat and Chimamanda Adichie. Among them are three undergraduate essays on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*; three graduate essays on *Frankenstein*; three graduate essays on rhetorical theory, and three literary reviews. One of the graduate papers received the 2021 Award for Outstanding Graduate Paper in the School of Arts and Humanities.

The centerfold is a rendition of Alexander Cabanel's *L'Ange Dechu* (1847), sketched by undergraduate student Citlalli Luna in charcoal and pastels on textured paper, as part of a creative project on Dante's *Inferno*.

The cover art design incorporates a reproduction of *Calliope Cookie, Muse*, by mixed media, collage-style artist Winona Cookie (U.S. 2017).

The issue was edited and designed entirely online after the campus went virtual during the Covid-19 pandemic. Team *Calliope*, following Destinee Sims's expertise as digital design editor, sorted through essays submitted and rendered "blind" in Dropbox, read the issue back-to-back multiple times, and deliberated on ZOOM and on email. The bright ideas and sharp eyes of three students--Allison Rigby, Kayla Rogers, and Gina Romley--made the process smooth.

Finally, I thank graduate student Destinee Sims for her expertise and hard work laying the manuscript on Adobe InDesign two years in a row.

Zeltzin Estrada-Rodríguez

Trauma Theory in *Fences*

Living in an imperfect world implies that with all the good, beautiful, lively things that come with it must also come the bad, ugly, and dull counterparts. Inevitably, then, most human beings will encounter at least one negative or stressful experience in their lives, and plenty of research done in the field of psychology has shown that these “bad events produce more emotion, have bigger effects on adjustment measures, and have longer lasting effects” (Baumeister 328). Although no bad occurrence is comparative in measure to any other bad occurrence—since they all fare out differently upon each individual person—any occurrence or set of circumstances that causes an individual physical or emotional harm or threatens their being and leaves lasting negative effects on the person’s well-being would be considered an instance of trauma. Trauma is typically associated with different types of physical abuse, war, or life-threatening injuries or illnesses; however, recent research has shown that less directly physical distressing experiences can be just as traumatic and have just as negative of an effect on a person’s mental, emotional, and behavioral well-being. Racism is amongst one of the newer phenomena to be considered as traumatizing. Though it is not as commonly overt or physical as the other types of trauma, it poses “threats to a person’s cultural or racial self-integrity [which] seem to make [a] person more susceptible to PTSD” (Helms et al. 54). August Wilson’s play *Fences* attests to this very premise, as it depicts the life of a fifty-three-year-old Black man, Troy Maxson, in late 1950s America and his lifelong struggles with racism. This historical play unveils the lifelong racial trauma Troy has endured through Wilson’s use of detailed, vivid, and metaphorical dialogue, subsequently revealing also the intergenerational effects racial trauma has not only on a broader, societal level but also on a more personal, familial level.

Akin to any other trauma, racial trauma leaves a distressing, psychological imprint on the victim’s mind, thereafter altering the way they think, feel, and behave (Helms et al. 55). Though a great majority of racist incidents do not take the form of a physical occurrence as domestic violence or rape do, and they do not typically leave

concrete consequences as an injury or natural disaster might, the social circumstances and ideas racism perpetuates deter and impede a victim's ability to flourish—as all the aforementioned types of trauma also do. It is the feeling and subsequent internalization of the idea that a person or group of people have immense power over them that threatens people of color's personhood, causing many persons of color to lose their personal sense of power and, thus, their personal sense of agency and livelihood.

This powerlessness endured by people of color was especially pertinent in the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century southern America when African Americans' lives were controlled by the legalization of Jim Crow laws. In 1865 after the culmination of the Civil War, the thirteenth amendment was ratified, abolishing the slavery of African Americans. Unfortunately, this ratification did not equal freedom for their community—especially not in the former Confederate states of the south that were fighting in the Civil War to keep slavery. Following their defeat in the war, the southern states enacted the aforementioned Jim Crow laws, which were “a legal way to put Black citizens into indentured servitude, to take voting rights away, to control where they lived and how they traveled, and to seize children for labor purposes” (Jim Crow Laws). Clearly, although they were no longer slaves, Black people in late nineteenth and early twentieth America were still heavily controlled by white people in power due to Jim Crow laws and, thus, were divested of the ability to live their lives on their own terms and desires.

Troy Maxson and his family unfortunately grew up in this region of America during this time period, and the accounts of his childhood are telling of psychological trauma first and foremost endured by his father. When he is describing his father to his oldest son Lyons and his good friend Bono, Troy tells them that his father was solely preoccupied with “getting them bales of cotton in to Mr. Lubin,” the white man who owned the cotton farm Troy and his family used to work on (Wilson 51). Troy believed his father cared so much about working for Mr. Lubin that he did not actually care about his kids: “all he wanted was for [his kids] to learn how to walk so he could start [them] to working” (Wilson 50). Evidently, Troy's father's livelihood was so entrenched in his Southern servitude to Mr. Lubin that he did not adequately tend to his own flesh and blood. Rather than being able to live his own life, on his own land, in his own home, tending to his and his children's wants and needs, he prioritized and lived for the desires of Mr. Lubin and, ultimately, the American system that was rooted in the disempowerment of his people. Troy's recounting of the way his father lived thus reveals the traumatizing impact that African American subordination and subjugation had upon not only his own mentality and behaviors, but on Troy as well. Troy had such

a poor experience growing up with his father's constant subordination of him that he came to understand him as "the devil himself," and ran away from home at the young age of fourteen (52). Clearly, the racist societal circumstances of the time enabled the successive racial trauma to be passed on intergenerationally in the Maxson family: the internalized racist ideologies that taught Troy's father to behave in accordance to the values of white America rather than his own self and family engendered a deep sense of anger, unhappiness, and pain in Troy, producing a racial trauma distinct from his father's but, nonetheless, a racial trauma one and the same.

Unfortunately, escaping the reins of Mr. Lubin, his father, and the Southern States did not make life as a Black man in America any easier for Troy. He traveled up north to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania—where he would then spend the remainder of his life—and found that even there, in a northern state where he thought he would find freedom since Jim Crow laws were not enforced, "not only couldn't [colored folk] get a job...[they] couldn't find no place to live" (Wilson 54). He explains he spent time "living in shacks made of sticks and tarpaper" under the Brady Street Bridge and eventually "started stealing" food and money to survive (54). Soon thereafter, still in his teenage years, he got his first girlfriend pregnant, which led to the birth of Lyon. This made it harder on Troy as he then had "to steal three times as much" (54). One day, when he went to go rob someone to provide for his family of three, he explains that he "pulled out [his] knife...and [the man he was going to rob] pulled out a gun" and "shot [him] in the chest" (55). He describes that "it felt like somebody had taken a hot branding iron and laid it on [him]" (55). He continues to describe exactly how he killed the man—the act that landed him in jail for fifteen years. According to Joshua Pederson, a literary traumatologist, this very "augmented narrative detail" of an obviously tragic time for Troy is indicative of "heightened traumatic memory" (Pederson 339). Although previous literary and psychological research claimed that traumatic experiences disappear from a victim's memory, the research Pederson reviews indicates that emotional stress experienced during a traumatizing event or series of events actually enhances memory; this explains why Troy is able to recount such vivid details from a time of his life that occurred nearly forty years earlier. Thus, it can be concluded from Troy's incredibly detailed dialogue that he, and most likely many other black folk, were traumatized at the hands of the discriminatory and limiting racist social circumstances of early twentieth century America.

But racial trauma did not end for Troy there, sadly. He further explains that once he got out of jail, he cleaned up his act and stopped robbing. He became a very skilled baseball player while he was in jail and wanted to continue pursuing a career in the

sport once he was out; however, racial discrimination did not allow that to happen for him. Although he and many other Black men were better than the white players playing in the major leagues, they were forced to play in what was called “the Negro Leagues” (Wilson 34). Although that event happened some twenty years prior to the time the play takes place, Troy continually exhibits distress over the unfortunate situation throughout the entirety of the play. Discussing his lost dreams with his family and Bono always ends up in frustration. His distress is made evident when he expresses his feeling that “there ought not never have been no time called too early” for him to play professionally (9). He wishes that the major leagues would have just let any skilled player play, regardless of their skin color. The subsequent trauma following this adverse event in his life can not only be seen in his cries of frustration so many years later but also in the ways he distorts reality through his use of metaphorical language. Pederson asserts that a person’s distortion of natural reality could be another indicator of trauma, and Troy commonly does this throughout the play. Arguing with his wife Rose and trying to justify his cheating on her, he tells her that he “maybe came into the world backwards”, as he “was born with two strikes before [he] came to the plate” (69). Troy’s avoidance of real-life, tangible language to describe his past traumatic history and current traumatizing actions is a symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder as diagnosed by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (*Trauma-Informed Care in Behavioral Health Services* 62). In other words, this use of baseball metaphors to describe the trauma he has endured and to justify the pain and trauma he has subsequently brought upon Rose suggests that he is warping reality to prevent himself from having to endure, again, the pain racial trauma has consistently incited in him throughout his life.

Although Troy is more aware of the racist circumstances that exist in America during his lifetime than his father was, he too passes on his racial trauma onto his kin, just as his father did to him. He especially passes it onto his youngest son, Cory. Although segregation is still existent during Cory’s adolescence, racial affairs between Blacks and whites in the U.S. had significantly alleviated since Troy’s youth. Specifically, more colored people were being allowed to play sports professionally. Cory is just as talented an athlete as his father was, so much so that he gets recruited to play football at the collegiate level. However, the negative emotions Troy still harbors against his discriminatory experience in professional baseball prevents Cory from getting his own shot. Troy forbids Cory from playing football on the premise that “the white man ain’t gonna let [him] get nowhere with that football” (35). Although plenty of people had made it clear to Troy that “times have changed since [he] was playing baseball”, as they had “lots more colored boys playing” both baseball and football, he

is letting the events and mindsets of the racial circumstances of his own time impede his son's livelihood (9). Once Troy passes away, Cory is an adult with a career in the military. When he returns home for the funeral, Cory confides in his mother that while he was living under Troy's supervision, he felt that his father's shadow "followed [him] everywhere" and that it "weighed on [him] and sunk into [his] flesh...until he couldn't tell which one was [him] anymore" (97). Cory's dissociation—another symptom of traumatization— from his own self shows just how much his father's traumatized mindset riddled him of his own desires, dreams, and life, engendering a unique racial trauma within him (*Trauma-Informed Care in Behavioral Health Services* 69). His confusion of himself with his father's self attests to the reality of intergenerational racial trauma that was passed on from Troy to him, threatening and destroying Cory's personal sense of identity.

In the last analysis, Troy Maxson is both a victim and a perpetrator of racial trauma. Although he runs away from the overtly racist reins of the twentieth-century American South, it turns out that the reins of racism were inescapable for him and other African Americans living in America during that time. The traumatizing effects were so discrete yet so evident that they managed to travel across three generations of the Maxson family, ridding each generation of their livelihood and overall happiness. Thus, Wilson's *Fences* attests to the immense power intergenerational racial trauma may hold upon the wellbeing of racial minorities in America.

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Katie Gonzalez

Ecophobia & Ecofeminism: Where Hamlet and Ophelia Differ

The landscape of Denmark is a driving force behind the political discourse in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and it also subtly foreshadows both Hamlet's and Ophelia's death. Some of the tenets of Cheryll Glotfelty's theory of ecocriticism, known as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Barry 248), can be fruitfully applied to Claudius's rampant desire to control the kingdom's land that influenced his decision to murder King Hamlet. By usurping the throne for power and natural resources, Claudius consequentially ignites a chain reaction of deaths by murder and by suicide. Ecocritical concepts such as "ecophobia" and "ecofeminism" allow us to explore both Hamlet's and Ophelia's vastly different demises in relation to the play's configuration of gender dichotomy.

One of *Hamlet*'s most intriguing qualities as a play is the fragile boundary between the natural and the supernatural. Peter Barry clarifies that ecocriticism's primary concern is to "re-read major literary works from an ecocentric perspective, with particular attention to the representation of the natural world" (270). Horatio, Bernardo, and Marcellus's discovery of the ghost in the play's first scene calls into question their preconceived notions of religion and the intangibility of the afterlife. Unable to converse with the apparition, the three men note how "it was about to speak when the cock crew./And then it started like a guilty thing/Upon fearful summons. I have heard/The cock, that is the trumpet of the morn,/Doft with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat/Awake the god of day" (Shakespeare 1.1: 162-167). The rooster represents the natural world in this scene, acting as the destabilizing force that pulls in the reins on the supernatural when it breaks through the barrier between life and death. The natural world subtly engaging with the characters of this scene is the first of many interactions nature has in the play.

Hamlet's first soliloquy not only reveals his deep grief over his late father and distaste for his mother's incestuous marriage, but also what Theresa J. May calls his "ecophobia." Reviewing the theory originally formulated by Simon Estok, May deduces that "according to Estok, ecophobia is that general repulsion from the so-called natural world and its varied expressions that characterizes the modern and now

contemporary world" (138). Hamlet in crying out, "O, that this too, too sullied flesh would melt/Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew./Or that the Everlasting had not fixed/ His canon 'gainst self-laughter! Oh God, God,/How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable/ Seem to me all the uses of this world!" (Shakespeare 1.2: 133-138), reveals his newfound repulsion for living in his environment. Along with his declarative statement that "Denmark's a prison" (Shakespeare 2.2: 262), Hamlet embraces a new hateful perspective on the land that Claudius otherwise displays pleasure in controlling. May provides the insight that "Shakespeare's plays are documents of living artistic practice, and without at least acknowledgement that meaning-making is contingent on that very lively (read ecological) context, textual analyses are suspect. What are we about in ecocriticism if not the return and remembrance of the body- the earth's, the animal's, and our own?" (140). *Hamlet* astoundingly testifies in accordance with this belief of remembrance, most evident in the famous monologue "what a piece of work is man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving/how express and admirable; in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals" (Shakespeare 2.2: 327-331). However, what seems to highlight Hamlet's ecophobia most is his concluding statement: "and yet, to me what is this quintessence of dust? Man/delights not me" (Shakespeare 2.2: 331-333). Hamlet paints an elaborately altruistic picture of humanity only to reveal that it is actually excessively glorified and thus removes himself from being in kinship with members of his own species. By rejecting the "living artistic practice" (140) that May conveys to be most popular in Shakespeare's plays, Hamlet signifies that his fascination with death is only growing in magnitude.

Ophelia is another character within *Hamlet* who loses her liveliness in the face of her father's murder, developing an acute sense of insanity and an estranged relationship with nature. However, Ophelia Selam's article "Ecofeminism or Death: Humans, Identity and the Environment" highlights that gender stereotypes associate women more strongly with nature rather men. Selam in turn alludes to Carolyn Merchant's book *The Death of Nature*, which revisits the scientific revolutionary findings of René Descartes and Isaac Newton among others, who "are all responsible, in some way or another, in creating our vision of nature/the world. This reevaluation is a revisiting of history (a fundamentally feminist practice), which begins with the most simple and most basic association: that of 'woman' and 'nature'" (77). This association becomes most evident with Ophelia's introduction to the play, when Laertes warns her: "the chariest maid is prodigal enough/If she unmask her beauty to the moon./Virtue itself 'scapes not calumnious strokes./The canker galls the infants of the spring/Too oft

before their buttons be disclosed/And in the morn and liquid dew of youth/ Contagious blastments are most imminent” (Shakespeare 1.3:40-46). Laertes associates Ophelia with a fragile, blooming flower not only to warn her of her sensitive relationship with Hamlet, but as Selam writes, to distinguish her place as a woman kin with nature. Because of the “age-old association of nature with women” and both being “provided with their roles, which were primarily passive, hence manageable,” Ophelia operates as nothing more than a puppet for the men holding the power (Selam 78).

Carla Spivack also takes a feminist stance in her article “The Woman Will Be Out: A New Look at the Law in *Hamlet*,” she argues that “gender is implicated throughout this tug of war between the king and aristocrats over land . . . Widowhood, as seen through the law and culture, also focuses this anxiety about female power. Gertrude’s widowed status, and her behavior in that role, is central to the play’s concerns” (33-34).

Just as Ophelia is treated like a flower in Laertes’s metaphor, Queen Gertrude as a widowed woman embodies the entire land of Denmark. The two are assumed to essentially be one and the same, as Claudius cannot gain control of the kingdom without acquiring the woman it now falls to. Spivack then investigates how

“whether Ophelia kills herself or drowns accidentally, the abundant references to suicide make clear that it is an important theme. Contemporary law deemed suicide a felony because it deprived the king of a subject and a member of the body politic... Ophelia’s death, removing her from the political realm as well as the literal community of the burying ground, removes her, and the female body she represents, from the body politic” (Spivack 35).

Because of Ophelia’s death, her gendered expectations to marry Hamlet and produce an heir die as well; the future and integrity of the royal lineage are now damaged even further.

Ophelia’s death also serves as retribution for Laertes. The news that she died while collecting “crow flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples/That liberal shepherds give a grosser name./But our cold maids do ‘dead men’s fingers’ call/them” (Shakespeare 4.7: 193-196). The report that “down her weedy trophies and herself/Fell in the weeping brook” (Shakespeare 4.7: 199-200) punishes Laertes for reducing his sister’s femininity to be nothing more than a flower. Nature deems that, in accordance to Laertes’s metaphor, it is appropriate to place Ophelia amongst her kind so that she is no longer subjected to the puppetry of man’s body politic. The purple flowers referred to as “dead men’s fingers” are not the last instance in which nature foreshadows a character’s death in the play. When Hamlet and Horatio walk amongst the graves that Ophelia will soon join, Hamlet’s famous contemplation of the skull foreshadows the

fate he will soon meet. In asking-- "why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till he find it stopping a bung-hole?" (Shakespeare 5.1: 210-211)-- Hamlet reveals the bitter truth that "Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander/returneth to dust, the dust is earth; of earth/we make loam; and why of that loam whereto he/was converted might they not stop a beer barrel?" (Shakespeare 5.1: 216-219). Despite his ecophobia, Hamlet establishes that every person, regardless of their status, will become nothing more than a fraction of nature's composition. With the arrival of Ophelia's funeral procession, Laertes jumps into the grave she will eternally lay in with Hamlet following suit. As the two begin fighting with one another, they are both oblivious to the foreshadowing of their own deaths.

In losing his father and the right to the throne, Hamlet develops a morbid fascination for death as his developing ecophobia causes him to reject all other embodiments of nature, such as Ophelia. While his father's ghost provides him with the purpose to avenge his death, Hamlet hesitates to commit to any concrete actions, as he comes upon the realization that every individual regardless of accomplishment will accrue no value in death. However, Hamlet's male status privileges his hesitance and brooding contemplation in ways that Ophelia's womanhood could not. Facing constant belittlement and categorical instructions, Ophelia loses her sanity when every man she loved-- father, brother, lover--abandons her. Despite the ambiguity surrounding her death, Ophelia escaped the expectations she faced in a man's world.

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Lauren Nitsch

Art, Catastrophe, and Everything After in Edwidge Danticat's "The Gift"

Natural disasters in third-world countries such as Haiti often invite a stream of attention, ranging from morbid fascination through compassion to pity, but that attention invariably tapers off as time passes. What becomes of these countries and survivors afterwards, personally and artistically, falls to the wayside as news reports and public interest die down, but those who carry on in catastrophe's wake must grapple with the ramifications of loss long after the international spotlight has moved on. The concept of the "single story," which was originally developed by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie to explain how lack of diverse literature feeds into the spread of stereotypes about Nigeria, comes into play in Haiti as well, with narratives surrounding the nation and its people often limited to tragic news segments about natural disasters and abject poverty. Where the "single story" of Haitian survivors might characterize impacted populations as poor victims whose continued existence revolves around the charity of wealthy nations, Edwidge Danticat's "The Gift" highlights how individuals with vibrant pasts, complicated presents, and uncertain futures come to terms with an earthquake in Haiti as people and artists under their own power. Use of flashbacks, complex personal relationships, and symbolism to capture disasters that defy description combine to cast a light on the depth behind tragedy in Haiti and the universal, undying drive towards creation and self-expression that media tends to overlook.

Rather than only taking interest in the aftermath of disaster, the narrative explores Anika's and Thomas's personalities and fleshes out their circumstances, highlighting that they are both fully realized individuals and not limited to the role of tragic figures. Anika is described as having taken initiative in their romance, being "the one who'd pursued him" instead of waiting for his advances, which adds to her characterization as an active figure capable of exercising her own agency (85). Though she finds traits such as "flirting with her in another woman's presence" to be "sexy," the realization that Thomas has a family still "[hits] her like an assault," indicating that her

personal tastes do not drown out her ethical code (86). While both are irreversibly impacted by the earthquake, catastrophe does not define their characters. In the essay "*Create Dangerously: A Poetics of Writing as Memorial Art; the Text as Echo Chamber*," Anja Bandau elaborates on the significance of Danticat's use of individual anecdotes in her "testimonial mode of writing," stating that her "mode of writing participates in unraveling received notions and master narratives, and reveals ties... that facilitate new perspectives on Haiti and Haitian culture" (217). In defying common narratives that restrict the kinds of stories Haitians are allowed to live out, Danticat offers a glimpse into two complex lives that, while fictional, reflect the reality that Haitian people love and transgress and grapple with their human experience like any other.

The use of flashbacks defies a common trend of ignoring the pasts of Haitian disaster survivors and approaching their tales as though poverty and misfortune were the only defining factors in their lives. In "The Gift," past and present are woven together throughout, with Anika's narration jumping between memories of her affair with Thomas, the first news of the earthquake, her artistic contemplations, and their current interactions. Thomas's first appearance, where Anika notes that "he looked nothing like the dapper man she once loved," immediately turns into a reflection on the past when Thomas was at his peak and worked in real estate (83). It is worth noting that Thomas's background subverts expectations of Haitian stories always centering around poverty, and the choice to introduce Thomas through his career and romantic relationship rather than as a damaged survivor combats the tendency to place tragedy at the fore of narratives about Haitian people. He suffers from trauma and has lost a limb, but these wounds are not the entirety of his history. Where news about Haiti often stop and end with catastrophe, it is made clear that Anika and Thomas's stories exist beyond the bounds of one terrible episode and will continue to develop long after the earthquake's effects have faded.

Furthermore, Anika's thoughts about how to depict earthquakes in art and her symbolic answer draw attention to how the desire to create cannot be crushed by even great personal turmoil. For all the destruction that the earthquake wreaks, Anika's artistic drive finds in it a subject matter worth sharing with others, but she struggles to express the disaster through painting and ponders whether she should depict "soil monsters devouring the earth" or "write messages on [her] canvases, in case anyone misses the point" (Danticat, "The Gift" 92). The gift she gives Thomas is her answer to the question of how best to capture the emotional significance of the earthquake, which she does by combining birds with Thomas's dead wife and daughter to create an

amalgamation of “birds with human faces and legs” (104). For all its bizarreness, and despite her gift failing to resonate with Thomas, Anika still finds comfort in her art and hopes the people she remembers by it, whom she calls “her angels of history,” might share in the same scenery with her (108). The earthquake presented both emotional and artistic challenges, firstly in the deaths of Thomas’s family and secondly in proving difficult to represent in art, but Anika finds a way to create something meaningful regardless. Depicting Qadine and Dina as half-birds and referring to them as “angels” hints that what might at first appear an odd hybrid holds a deeper symbolic meaning—with wings, the dead might yet fly, and their stories can carry on in spirit. In *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work*, Danticat discusses the idea of an undying spirit that is present in Haitian culture and that could be said to be reflected in Anika’s actions: “In the Haitian Vodou tradition,” Danticat says, “it is believed by some that the souls of the newly dead slip into rivers and... lured by ritual prayer and song... are reborn” (175). In a similar manner, Anika offers tribute to Qadine and Dina through art and speaks to them as though their souls were drawn near her creation. This kind of artistic processing of experiences after catastrophe is rarely brought to light and often overshadowed by dwelling on Haiti’s misfortune, but Anika shows that the drive to create is unmoved in the face of disaster.

Even as a myriad of media narratives boil nations and peoples down to caricatures, there is a great deal that people share across their differences. “The Gift” makes this clear with its characters. Anika and Thomas are nuanced individuals who weave their own stories of love and betrayal with the depth of their experiences, which are impossible to encapsulate by looking at disaster and its impacts alone. Their pasts exist independent of the earthquake, and their futures do not end when news about Haiti fall off the radar. The titular gift is an example of the power of art in coping with catastrophe, with Anika using symbolism to connect with those lost to disaster and triumph over the challenge of depicting the indescribable. All of these elements defy the “single story” that would paint Haiti as a nation of poverty or nothing more than a victim of disaster, and in so doing, Danticat brings to light one of the many facts of human existence: that there are as many stories as there are individuals, and no one tale, even repeated a hundred times, can eclipse the infinitely varied stories of life.

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Christin Peel

Exploring Queer Theory in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

During the late 1800s, homosexuality was considered a grievous act that was illegal in England and was punishable by up to 10 years of imprisonment and hard labor. To be accused of homosexuality in 19th century England could ruin a person's entire reputation because it was perceived as a sinful illness that could spread to unknowing victims. This is where we begin to see its manifestation in Gothic literature, personified in the trope of a monster known as the vampire. In its earliest appearances in popularized literature, the vampire possessed queer undertones and was vilified due to the culture surrounding it. Brom Stoker's *Dracula* employs euphemism to showcase a villain that is drenched in queer-coding, poses a threat to heteronormativity and purity, and serves to perpetuate the cultural view of homosexuality during its time.

Dracula is described by Jonathan Harker, as projecting queer undertones. In one of his descriptions, Harker refers to Dracula as "strange" (Stoker 30), which the footnotes of the text reveal, was a word used throughout the Victorian era in reference to people in the queer community (30[nn 5]). Harker also describes Dracula by stating, "When later I saw him through the chink of the hinges of the door laying the table in the dining-room, I was assured of it; for if he does himself all these menial offices, surely it was proof that there is no one else to do them" (Stoker 32). Harker observes that Dracula appears to be the only other person in the castle aside from himself, implying that he is doing all of the housework. Men were discouraged from performing these domestic tasks which the Victorians deemed feminine. Men who engaged in "feminine" activities were seen as a threat to the hypermasculine norm and were often othered or perceived as gay. In her article "Vampires Among Us," Linda Heidenreich explores the appearance of the Vampire in media during times of crisis in society. Heidenreich states that "Crafted at a time when conservative families were threatened by the 'new woman' and the 'aesthete,' Dracula embodied both new gender roles, thus threatening the patriarchal family and the empire" (94). Placing these culturally significant stereotypes of homosexuality onto the villain in the story further maintains the idea that homosexuality is evil and sinful. This is helpful when discouraging people

in society from acting on what was viewed to be sexually deviant behavior.

One of the main characteristics of a vampire is seducing unknowing victims and drinking their blood for sustenance. *Dracula* can be interpreted as a euphemism for sex, and the book places an emphasis on the spiritual connection made through the sharing of blood. This is shown through the character Arthur, who explains that he feels as if he is married to his dead fiancé, Lucy, because he gave her a blood transfusion. Dr. Seward shares this in his diary when he states, "he felt since then as if they two had been really married, and that she was his wife in the sight of God" (Stoker 157). The transfer of blood from one person to another was performed through the injection of a hollow needle or catheter into someone and draining their blood into someone else. In a similar way, Dracula pierces his victims with his teeth before drinking their blood, which is symbolic of penetration and the exchange of bodily fluids. The vampire feeds on men and women equally, regardless of their sex, encouraging the idea that the vampire is a sexually deviant creature. The act of Dracula drinking the blood of a man specifically suggests that he is a threat to the heterosexual norm and perpetuates the fear, for men, of being penetrated. In a scene that furthers this idea, Dracula protects Harker from the vampire sisters stating, "How dare you touch him, any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I have forbidden it?...This man belongs to me" (Stoker 43). Dracula's claim of possession has of him contains homoerotic undertones and frightens Harker because of the implied bond created through Dracula drinking his blood. Harker is held in the castle against his wishes because Dracula wants him for himself, feeding into the fear that homosexuality is a threat to the autonomy of men.

The cultural view of homosexuality in 1897 was that it was sinful and wrong, forcing people who had same-sex partners underground. Sodomy Laws were reformed to exclude Capital Punishment (Sanders 7); however, this did not protect the queer community from acts of violence and brutality by the rest of society. In his article "The Foul Conspiracy to Screen Salisbury and Sacrifice Morton": A Microhistory of Extortion, Resistance and Same-Sex Intimacy in Early Nineteenth-Century London", David Orr explores the fact that homosexual people were forced to the outskirts of society. In the article Orr states how "Increased policing of London's public spaces had effectively pushed same-sex intimacy out of molly houses and parks into more private settings" (578). This cultural view of queer people hiding and living on the edges of society parallels with Dracula, who lives far outside of society in his castle in Transylvania. Just as queer people had no power in the light of day, or in public, the vampires are subdued by the sun, which is ultimately how Harker is able to overpower

Dracula and kill him. In the book, Mina recounts this by stating that, “[Dracula’s] eyes saw the sinking sun, and the look of hate in them turned to triumph...But, on the instant, came the sweep and flash of Jonathan’s great knife...whilst at the same moment Mr. Morris’s bowie knife plunged into the heart” (Stoker 325). Much like queer people are pushed into the shadows out of their safe spaces, Dracula was discovered in his box of earth and killed because he was seen as a threat to society.

Brom Stoker’s *Dracula* perpetuates the negativity surrounding homosexuality, exemplifying the threat of otherness that plagues purity in society. Personifying the queer experience into a monster that is then destroyed maintains social order and protects the purity of unknowing victims from the clutches of homosexuality and deviant behavior. The death of the villain who embodies queer stereotypes and experiences protects heteronormativity, giving society the comforting sense that they are spared from the spread of the unknowing illness that will lead to sin.

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Gina Romley

Poststructuralist Approaches to *Hamlet*

Beginning in the mid-20th century, scholars within literary studies, following key figures from disciplines like anthropology, sociology, history, and philosophy, began rejecting long-entrenched systems of thought by pointing out that the centers which provided their stability had, in fact, an unstable foundation, thus seeking to reevaluate universal truths and the nature of reality. When studying William Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet* through a poststructuralist lens, elements of the framework become evident despite the fact that the play was published centuries prior to the onset of the theory. The story revolves around Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, as he copes with the disintegration of his home life and homeland at the hands of his murderous uncle, Claudius. As *Hamlet's* plot unfolds, the tragedy can be said to exhibit Jean Baudrillard's seminal postmodern theory of simulation through sentiments expressed about the Bible by Polonius and the play within the play in Act 2, Scene 2. Furthermore, *Hamlet* can also be said to enact Jean-François Lyotard's rejection of metanarratives through Hamlet's doubts about his supernatural encounter with the ghost of King Hamlet.

In his impactful work *Simulacra and Simulations*, Jean Baudrillard argues that symbols do not represent or stand for incontrovertible truths; rather the existence of symbols simulates or feigns a nonexistent reality (Barry 89). He explains that the process of decoupling a symbol from the truth associated with it involves four phases, the third of which bears interesting implications to *Hamlet*. Baudrillard explains that "[the symbol] masks the absence of basic reality" (Baudrillard 4). In phases one and two, a symbol either represents or misrepresents a widely accepted basic reality, but, in phase three, the same symbol becomes a decoy for the sole purpose of maintaining an illusion that the basic reality it once stood for exists at all. In this way, according to Baudrillard, the symbol becomes bereft of its original meaning; however, the symbol "is neither true nor false: it is a deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real" (Baudrillard 5). Based on Baudrillard's theory, the lines between what is reality and what is simulation blur to complete collapse because symbols exist to validate concepts and ideas that are absent. In this way, societies

maintain the presence of symbols to feign the presence of what once was.

Hamlet provides a pertinent example of Baudrillard's concept in Scene 3, Act 1 when Claudius, Polonius, and Ophelia disguise their secretive plotting to spy on Hamlet with a Bible, and Polonius says, "[r]ead on this [Bible], / ('Tis too much proved), that with devotion's visage / And pious action we do sugar o'er / The devil himself" (Shakespeare 3.1.50-55). By using a Bible as a prop for Ophelia to carry in order to feign innocence, the Holy Book is used to conceal the absence of Christian morality in Denmark due to the rampant corruption and criminal activity taking place within the ruling class. Consistent with Baudrillard's understanding of symbolism in *Simulacra and Simulations*, the Bible is no longer a source of moral authority and wisdom for Claudius, as it once symbolized, but now its original symbolism is manipulated to feign the presence of Christian morality under his rule. Furthermore, acting can be viewed as a form of deception. Act 3, Scene 2 can be said to reflect Baudrillard's theory of simulation when Hamlet uses the performance of a play as an opportunity to prove his uncle's guilt by dramatizing his crimes and awaiting his reaction. The play and theatricality in general stand as symbols of the arts and entertainment, and Hamlet perverts this purpose by crafting the narrative of the play around his own agenda. Claudius, a new King, welcomes the notion of a successful play being commissioned by his court because the presence of arts and leisure represents a thriving society under his rule, but Hamlet's ability to manipulate this symbol reveals Claudius's troubles will not be so easily repaired. In accordance with Baudrillard's third phase of simulation, the play is no longer reflective of the thriving society that it once stood for, and thus, Hamlet can subvert the symbol of the play in order to fit his needs.

Jean-François Lyotard shares similarities with another postmodern mind, Jean-Françoise Baudrillard, regarding the unattainability of absolute truths, but Lyotard extends his analysis to include bigger institutions and thought practices. For example, in his influential work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Lyotard establishes an important concept when he states, "I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard xxiv). In this sense, the term "metanarrative" comprises any overarching framework --such as Christianity or science or history-- that attempts to explain ambiguities in certain terms. As Peter Barry further argues, "'Grand Narratives' of progress and human perfectibility, then, are no longer tenable, and the best we can hope for is a series of 'mini-narratives', which are provisional, contingent, temporary, and relative and which provide a basis for the actions of specific groups in particular local circumstances" (Barry 88). Postmodernism seeks to

dismantle traditional institutions that tend to paint in broad brushstrokes humanity and other abstract concepts by focusing on deriving understanding from small, microcosmic examples. According to Lyotard, postmodernism rejects the standpoint that knowledge is “simply a tool of the authorities” to establish a homogeneous society and thought into manageable absolutes, but knowledge is attainable through local examples and appreciation for nuance (Lyotard 23). By the logic of Lyotard’s rejection of reliance on metanarratives, truth is revealed to be relative to specific situations and not significant to the greater picture.

An exemplar of postmodern rejection of metanarratives and absolutisms can be observed in Act 3, Scene 2 of *Hamlet* through the play within the play, a story that is based on the information that the Ghost tells Hamlet in Act 1. Hamlet seeks to verify that Claudius murdered his father by virtue of his reaction to the play when he tells Horatio, “[i]f his occulted guilt / do not itself unkennel in one speech / it is a damned ghost that we have seen” (Shakespeare 3.2.85-87). Hamlet, in this excerpt, is confessing that he suspects that the conversation he had with the Ghost is a figment of his imagination; he vacillates between disbelief of his own reality of his experience with the Ghost and avenging his father’s death. Instead of blindly relying on metanarratives about the supernatural or confronting Claudius directly, Hamlet is satisfied to find out about Claudius’ guilt in a verifiable way. Moreover, in Act 2, Scene 2, discussing his grievances over Denmark, Hamlet tells Rosencrantz, [t]here is / nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it / so” (Shakespeare 2.2.268-270). To Hamlet, at that desperate moment in his life, Denmark represents negativity due to Claudius’ actions, but this does not necessarily mean the same for Rosencrantz, who disagrees with Hamlet. Consistent with postmodern thought, Hamlet is articulating that things are not inherently good or bad, but relative to the evaluator.

In conclusion, the application of poststructuralist approaches to literature requires the reader to dismantle entrenched systems upon which much of society is based. The postmodern thinker is challenged to embrace fragmentation, incompleteness, and ambiguity with the purpose of extricating reality from feigned illusion. A poststructuralist reading of William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* foregrounds a character currently undergoing drastic changes that make him question his ideas of family and country. The play undermines the sincerity of symbols such as the Bible and the theater in a manner that questions the purpose of their existence in society. More to the point, *Hamlet* seeks to ponder the nature of truth and reality while breaking down commonly accepted narratives. The works of Baudrillard and Lyotard make it possible to have insights about Shakespeare’s work previously unexplored.

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Grace VanKirk

“Dark Designs:” Melkor as Satan’s Literary Likeness

As Satan stalks the pages of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, the dark lord Melkor echoes his footsteps in the pages of J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Silmarillion*. *Paradise Lost* retells the events of the Book of Genesis in an epic poem while *The Silmarillion* is a cosmogony of Middle-Earth. Tolkien was versed in Milton’s masterpiece to the extent that he published a book called *Preface to Paradise Lost* in 1942. *The Silmarillion* followed over thirty years later. In many ways, Tolkien’s legendarium parallels Milton’s poem in scope, structure, and sheer ambition. Tolkien and Milton have in common an understanding of the tremendous importance of the fall of mankind as recorded in the Bible. In fact, Tolkien once wrote that “There cannot be any ‘story’ without a fall—all stories are ultimately about the fall” (Tolkien xv). If there cannot be a story without a fall, there cannot be a fall without a fiend. Enter Satan and Melkor, challengers of the throne of God, instigators of the fall, and lords of chaos and darkness. Milton’s influence on Tolkien is evident in Melkor’s striking resemblance to Satan. A comparison of Satan’s and Melkor’s attributes and actions reveals their similarity and accentuates the complexity of Satan as a unique demonic character.

Like Satan, Melkor is the mightiest among the angelic beings. And like Satan, his fatal flaw is pride. In their greed and arrogance, Satan and Melkor rebel against their creators, desiring to be gods themselves. Satan aspires “to have equall’d the Most High, / If he opposed: and with ambitious aim / Against the throne and monarchy of God” (Milton 1.40-42). Tolkien uses a metaphor of music to depict Melkor’s rebellion against Ilúvatar, the creator and ruler of all. Angelic beings known as the Ainur sing a great Music according to the “theme of Ilúvatar,” a song that foretells the metanarrative of Middle-Earth (Tolkien 15). The harmony of the song is broken by chaos, for “[it] came into the heart of Melkor to interweave matters of his own imagining that were not in accord with the theme of Ilúvatar; for he sought therein to increase the power and glory of the part assigned to himself” (Tolkien 16). Though Satan and Melkor succeed in introducing darkness and chaos into the world, their pride will ultimately be their downfall.

Similarly, Satan’s defining characteristics are reflected in Melkor. Both

characters are deceptive, eloquent, and cunning—traits that enable them not only to amass followers, but also to deceive their enemies. Milton's version of Satan is not the grotesque figure with horns and a tail, but a being of immense charisma who disguises his depravity. Beelzebub testifies to Satan's powers of persuasion when he describes the impact of Satan's rhetoric on his angelic legions: "If once they hear that voice, their liveliest pledge / of hope in fears and dangers, [...] they will soon resume / New courage, and revive, though now they lie / Grov'ling and prostrate on yon lake of fire" (Milton 1.274-280). Melkor also is able to summon a vast army by dint of his magnetism, for "of the Maiar many were drawn to his splendour in the days of his greatness, and remained in that allegiance down into his darkness" (Tolkien 31). Both Satan and Melkor are capable of concealing their evil intentions behind a facade of righteousness. Satan, for example, transforms himself into a cherub eager to see God's creation, thus deceiving an angel into revealing the abode of Adam and Eve. Melkor similarly "hid his thoughts, and postponed his vengeance" when he appears before the Valar for judgement, and wields "fair-seeming" "words and deeds" in order to undermine their rule (Tolkien 65). Satan, and Melkor as his literary likeness, is exceptional in his ability to appear humble and holy to achieve his ulterior motives.

Significantly, the names of Satan and Melkor change after their fall. This shift is not a whim but is indicative of the betrayal of their purpose and their subsequent disinheritance from heaven. Melkor becomes Morgoth, while Satan was once Lucifer. In his account to Adam, the angel Raphael describes Satan thus: "Lucifer from heaven / (So call him, brighter once amidst the host / Of angels than that star the stars among)" (Milton 7.131-133). By rebelling, Satan forfeited his exalted place among the angels and his name with it. The name Lucifer means light-bearer (Hawkes 216). As God is light, Satan no longer proclaims his glory but is an enemy of God and a bearer of darkness and death. His change in name expresses his fall from grace and his change in role, as it does for Melkor in *The Silmarillion*. As a philologist, Tolkien carefully crafted the languages of elves, dwarves, and men, and instilled meaning in each name to reflect an individual's traits, deeds, or heritage. This linguistic precision is apparent in Melkor's name change. After Melkor slays the king of the elves and steals the Silmarils, the king's son "cursed Melkor, naming him *Morgoth*, the Black Foe of the World; and by that name only was he known to the Eldar ever after" (Tolkien 79). Similarly, the name Satan means "adversary" in Hebrew (Hawkes 389). Satan and Melkor are thus set in opposition to the good forces of the world. Melkor's original name means "He who arises in Might," indicating that he was the mightiest of the Ainur with the greatest potential for achieving his purpose (Tolkien 31). Instead of

rising to his potential as a paragon of the Valar, he descends to become their greatest enemy. Satan's loss of the epithet "light-bearer" and Melkor's gain of the epithet "Black Foe" indicate the mutual exclusivity of light and darkness. As they disavow the light, so does the light disavow him. Satan and Melkor are no longer called by the names they were given at creation, for they have betrayed the purpose they were created for.

The evil of Satan and Melkor is intensified by the fact that they cannot create but can only corrupt and destroy. As Satan instigates the fall of Adam and Eve to turn God's good into evil, so does Melkor exact his revenge on the Valar by infiltrating the world and corrupting creation. Satan separates Adam and Eve from perfect communion with God and attempts to thwart their purpose of living for God's glory. In *The Silmarillion*, this corruption is present in a symbolic rather than a spiritual fall. Melkor, "by slow arts of cruelty," warps the Children of Ilúvatar, or Elves, into misshapen creatures bent to his will (Tolkien 50). These are "the hideous race of the Orcs," bred "in envy and mockery of the Elves," for "naught that had life of its own, nor the semblance of life, could ever Melkor make since his rebellion" (Tolkien 50). Nonetheless, Melkor and Satan are ultimately subject to the will of God (or Ilúvatar), who uses their evil for his good.

A notable hallmark of the corruption wrought by Satan and Melkor is the defilement of creation, both in the twisting of nature to their own evil purposes and in the physical destruction of nature. When Satan and his army retire beaten from the field of battle, he concludes that greater force is needed and sets his army to constructing weapons of war. These mechanical devices are constructed of "brass, iron, stony mould" delved from the earth (Milton 6.576). Satan appropriates nature, turns it into machines with the sole purpose to damage, and believes that the artificial work of his hands is superior to the inherent might of his foes. In contrast, the unfallen angels retaliate by using nature itself, uprooting "the seated hills with all their load, / Rocks, waters, woods" to drop them on the opposing army and its "cursed engines" (Milton 6.644-646, 650). A comparable contrast is established in *The Silmarillion* between Melkor's fortress and the stronghold of the Valar. Angband, meaning "Iron Prison" or "Hell of Iron," is built when Melkor "piled the thunderous towers of Thangorodrim, that were made of the ash and slag of his subterranean furnaces, and the vast refuse of his tunnellings. They were black and desolate and exceedingly lofty; and smoke issued from their tops, dark and foul upon the northern sky" (Tolkien 118). Smoke connotes destruction, machinery, and pollution, thus signifying that Melkor devastates creation's natural bounty to replace it with counterfeit contrivances. "Tunnellings" specifies a

removal of preexisting matter as compared to the inception of matter in creation; Angband is formed from the corrupted debris of mining into the earth rather than from immaculate creation. In contrast, the Valar "raised up the mountain-walls of the Pelóri to sheer and dreadful heights, east, north, and south. Their outer sides were dark and smooth, without foothold or ledge, up to towers with crowns of white ice" (Tolkien 102). Unlike Melkor's towers, the mountains are not clouded with black smoke, but crowned with white ice. This contrast between natural and unnatural is reminiscent of the distinction made between the tactics used by the warring armies of angels. Like Satan's weapons of war, Angband is made by delving underground and is associated with fire and destruction, while the Pelóri are created as a natural defense, just as the angels used the unaltered hills to combat the devilish engineering of Satan. Moreover, Satan and Melkor attack nature itself. Melkor, with the spider Ungoliant, kills the two Trees that provide light for night and day and are symbolic of the rule of light over the land. By destroying the source of light and leaving darkness and fear to rule in its stead, Melkor assails goodness itself. His evil presence seeps into the land, for wherever he is, "Green things fell sick and rotted, and rivers were choked with weeds and slime, and fens were made, rank and poisonous, the breeding place of flies; and forests grew dark and perilous, the haunts of fear; and beasts became monsters of horn and ivory and dyed the earth with blood" (Tolkien 36). Satan takes a direct hand in the physical destruction of creation, but by securing the entrance of Sin and Death into the world, subjects the natural world to the ravages of time, the necessity of laborious cultivation, and the inevitability of death. Death asks Sin how he might assuage his insatiable hunger, to which she replies, "Thou therefore on these herbs, and fruits, and flowers, / Feed first, on each beast next, and fish, and fowl" (Milton 10.603.604). Plants will wither, men and animals will prey upon each other, and death will finally claim them all. Satan and Melkor alike spoil the original pristine state of nature, poisoning the land, introducing fear of death, and subverting its harmony. As their own natures are corrupted, Satan and Melkor corrupt whatever they come in contact with.

Despite their talent for destruction, Satan and Melkor experience fear and prove themselves cowards. Satan in his arrogance believes he is equal to or superior to God himself, and his fellow angels are inferior. Yet his vain words are belied by his cowardice. He approaches the archangel Michael in the battlefield thinking to smite him down, but instead suffers pain and defeat at Michael's hand. He then flees, "Gnashing for anguish, and despite, and shame, / To find himself not matchless, and his pride / Humbled by such rebuke, so far beneath / His confidence to equal God in power" (Milton 6.340-343). Satan makes no attempt to reclaim his honor in the next

assault but takes shelter behind his cannons and catapults. Melkor too is afraid of the Valar. Once he knows he has lost the final battle, he retreats and resumes his servile persona: "There Morgoth stood at last at bay, and yet unvaliant. He fled into the deepest of his mines, and sued for peace and pardon" (Tolkien 252). Satan and Melkor fell from the flawless state they were created in and therefore know fear, whereas the angels and Valar who remain loyal fear nothing. Furthermore, after Satan's defeat in hand-to-hand combat, he no longer comes forth in open war but resorts to lies and duplicity. Nor does he even appear in his own image but assumes the guise of a toad and a snake to mislead and tempt Eve. Melkor similarly employs insidious methods rather than engaging in undisguised hostilities, secretly sowing lies, jealousy, and suspicion among the elves to turn them against each other and weaken their kingdoms.

As figures of darkness, an interesting dissimilarity appears between Satan and Melkor in their reactions to light and goodness. Melkor as a dark lord displays an archetypal aversion to light. Yet when Satan witnesses God's glorious works, it provokes in him self-reflection, doubt, and regret. As he contemplates his plan for revenge, for example, he is beset with internal anguish and questions his identity, saying, "Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell; / And in the lowest deep a lower deep, / Still threat'ning to devour me, opens wide, / To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven. / O then at last relent: is there no place / Left for repentance, none for pardon left?" (Milton 4.75-80). Satan does not revel in his wickedness but exists in mental and emotional torture. Nonetheless, he declares, "Evil be thou my good," and concludes that his nature cannot change and that his pride prevents repentance (Milton 4.110). Yet he again experiences doubt when he observes the beauty of paradise and God's sublime creation of man and woman. Addressing the newly created earth with "inward grief" and "bursting passion," Satan exclaims, "With what delight could I have walk'd thee round" (Milton 9.97-98, 114). Satan acknowledges that he is barred from bliss and regrets what he has lost. While Satan is painfully conscious of his status as a fallen angel, Melkor exhibits no such misgivings. He is not thrown into paroxysms of remorse when confronted with light but views it only as an obstacle to his maneuverings. This is evident when the Valar create the sun and moon from the remains of the Trees, for Melkor "hated the new lights, and was for a while confounded by this unlooked-for stroke of the Valar" (Tolkien 101). Melkor does not soften at the sight of beauty as Satan does; it instead heightens his hatred for light and his lust for power. Thus, the presence of beauty and light stay the evil of Satan and Melkor, whether by the remorse it summons in Satan as a sinful angel or through the fear it strikes in Melkor as the antithesis of light.

Another key difference that arises between Satan and Melkor is based on their role in the narrative and their relationship with the reader. From the outset, it is clear that Melkor is evil, while Satan easily masquerades as a tragic hero. Satan exercises the same pull on his readers as he does on his followers. He fools them into sympathizing with him, posing as a noble martyr who was wrongly deprived of supremacy. Furthermore, Satan carries the plot of *Paradise Lost* though he is not actually the protagonist. The actions of the other characters, whether his followers or opponents, are largely in response to his conduct. Christ's query to his Father, for instance, frames God's options in terms of a reaction to Satan's sabotage: "shall he fulfil / His malice, and thy goodness bring to nought; / Or proud return, though to his heavier doom, / Yet, with revenge accomplish'd, and to hell / Draw after him the whole race of mankind, / By him corrupted?" (Milton 3.157-162). Satan enjoys agency in the plot while Melkor is chained to his own evil. Melkor's power in the narrative derives from his identity as evil embodied rather than an identity as the driving force of the plot. Once he has dropped all pretense to become the dark lord Morgoth, he spreads darkness in a reign of dread and terror. Herein lies his distinction from Satan, for the reader is privy to Melkor's evil intent. The pretense of virtue is directed towards the Valar—not the reader. Melkor is thus unlike Satan, for his effect on the reader is to elicit repulsion and desire for his defeat, while Satan appeals to the reader's compassion. This difference between the characters derives from their author's purpose for writing. Milton's purpose is to "justify the ways of God to men" while Tolkien's purpose is to create a vast history of the cataclysmic clash between good and evil (Milton 1.26). Therefore, Milton humanizes Satan to explore the nuances of the record in Genesis while Tolkien typifies his characters into a black and white conception of good and evil. Nonetheless, Tolkien's dark lord parallels Milton's notorious demon from his character flaws of arrogance and cowardice to his methods and motives of corruption. As both characters possess an enduring reputation as influential antagonists in original myth, their timelessness can be attributed to the dynamic intersection of their similarities and strengths.

she can choose the man she wants rather than settling for anyone. *Fantomina* is simultaneously a tale of oppression, liberation, and sexual exploration, a fitting candidate for Elaine Showalter's literary project intended to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature or "gynocriticism." Haywood's work takes London's patriarchal society to task and creates a satirical tale highlighting the oppression of women's experience. The application of feminist theory forces society to take an in-depth look at social constructs. Classic works by authors like Eliza Haywood undermine patriarchal ideals, giving more women a voice to combat inequality and influencing others to combat the system.

Several decades later, women's efforts to gain an education will give rise to the second wave of feminist criticism. Judith Sargent Murray, for one, focuses on women's education and its role in society in "On the Equality of the Sexes" (1790). She questions the validity of the assumptions that boys should be educated above girls. Her arguments still hold, as she expresses the concern that "the sister must be wholly domesticated, while the brother is led by hand through the flowery paths of science" (Murray 410). Historically, boys are positioned to consume academics, positioning male dominance throughout the educational system and, subsequently, the workforce. She argues that "[women's] minds are at full liberty for reflection...and if a just foundation is early laid, [women's] ideas will then be worthy of rational beings" (411). The objective is to advance young females' intellect and prove that young women are not inferior in academics by inherent inferiority. The lack thereof is because women are systemically left out of educational opportunity and assumed to lack capable intellects. She tears down the assumption that domestic duties are enough for intellectual stimulation. Authoring this literature trailblazed a feminist movement that pushed for equality in education, resulting in an upsurge of exemplary female authors of the 19th century such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, Louisa May Alcott, and Margaret Fuller.

The inspirational Margaret Fuller repeatedly argues in "Man *versus* Men. Woman *versus* Women" (1843) that there cannot be a binary as the female mind and soul are fluid in nature. She asserts that "harmony exists no less in difference than in likeness" (809). Her position is that "there is no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman. Let us be wise and not impede the soul... let us not bind it by the past to man or woman, black or white" (811). The dichotomy of feminine/masculine appears in her work often and continues to be relevant in contemporary gender discourse. The gender binary is anachronistic to Fuller; she was incredibly progressive. Combating these stereotypes was a part of her nature, and she continued to push back

on the contradictions posed in her era. Influenced and praised by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller radically attributes the concept of self-reliance to women and exposes the intersectionality of gender and racial inequality. She argued that enlightenment is possible only when equality is possible. The exposure and exploration of non-binary gender identity paved the way for Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928), a fantastical tale about an Englishman who transforms into a woman, living nearly four decades. Moreover, the change does not consume him; the narrator says, "It is a strange fact, but a true one, that up to this moment she had scarcely given her sex a thought" (Woolf 244). Essentially, Woolf posits that gender is fluid, not fixed and that it never is, an idea that has given rise to the acceptance of the LGBTQ community. Lady Orlando reacts to her transformation when a man lusts over her bare ankle, asserting that gender does not change the mind and demeanor of a character.

Well before their time, these three pioneering authors tore down toxically masculine ideas that confined women to submissive domesticity. With each passing decade, women writers, feminist critics, and Feminist Theory have contributed to society's progression by deconstructing patriarchal notions of gender. Calling into question systematic oppression has fueled further change in gender and racial equality over the years. Today, a long list of feminist writers transcends race and sexuality; impactful works by Alice Walker, Sandra Cisneros, Elizabeth Acevedo, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, boldly speak for every woman. Adopting the feminist outlook gave a voice to the Civil Rights Movement, women of color feminists, and LGBTQ communities, who have benefited from the historical pressure of the feminist fight. Female empowerment became a catalyst for most human rights issues, proving that female empowerment renders empowerment for all humanity.

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Elizabeth Wood

The Domino Effect of Patriarchal Oppression in *Hamlet*: A Feminist and a Psychological Approach

Feminism that focuses only on how the patriarchy is harmful to women is only partially effective. After all, in a patriarchy, it is men who hold power, and it is well-known that those in power see fit to stay in power as long as it serves them well. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg centered her life's work upon achieving the legal equality of men and women. She represented men who were not afforded the same rights as women and showed the Supreme Court system that gender inequality is harmful to both men and women. With the same logic, it can be argued that in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the systemic biases against women in patriarchal societies cause great psychological harm in men like Hamlet, who may not feel that they fit into masculine stereotypes or who otherwise make every attempt to fit gender expectations. In the play, Hamlet experiences a great deal of distress. Not only does he grieve the loss of his father, King Hamlet, but he also experiences secondhand betrayal as his mother, Gertrude, marries the recently deceased King Hamlet's brother, Claudius. But because of the beliefs that Denmark holds about men and women, and because Hamlet feels that his emotions are womanly, and therefore weak, he is not properly allowed to mourn. He feels that he cannot be his true self around other people, so he adopts different personas, depending on the social context. His misogynistic tendencies are amplified because of his self-awareness. In his feelings of inadequacy in the face of the patriarchal, he goes down a path of self-destruction. This paper is an attempt to show, through the lenses of psychoanalytical and feminist literary criticism, the extent to which systemic prejudice against women causes Hamlet deep psychological harm.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Sigmund Freud takes a particular interest in Shakespeare and tries to divine meaning from Shakespeare's life to assist his understanding of *Hamlet*. He writes that Shakespeare's grief over the loss of his own father, the neurosis that came with such a significant loss, and the childhood memories and feelings that he associated with his father might have influenced the development of *Hamlet*. Freud writes, "Just as all neurotic symptoms, like dreams themselves, are

capable of hyper-interpretation ... so every genuine poetical creation must have proceeded from more than one motive, more than one impulse in the mind of the poet, and must admit of more than one interpretation" (Chapter 2). He also mentions that Shakespeare's son, Hamnet, died in childhood. Like Hamnet, Hamlet dies young, and the profound loss that Shakespeare experienced likely influenced the "unique view of complicated masculine grief and loss" in the play (Bray 95). Certainly, much of what writers convey is informed by what they experience in life. Similarly, writing can be one of the ways in which writers derive meaning from their experiences. Through *Hamlet*, Shakespeare may have been trying to express the pain that he felt but remained hidden in a society in which men who feel emotional pain are considered weak – a society in which *weakness* is almost synonymous with *womanliness*. Shakespeare's true state of mind may have been shared in Hamlet's readiness to repress his emotions and mourn in secret.

Truly, Hamlet's culture is one where misogyny seems to be the norm. This is presented to the audience in the way the men discuss manliness and weakness rather than in the way they treat women. To be manly is to be unwomanly, and to be weak is to be like a woman. Characters such as Laertes and Claudius make this societal belief plain. For instance, as Laertes learns that his sister, Ophelia, has drowned, he cries as nature would have him do despite his shame (V.i.184-87). It would appear that such a display of emotion over the loss of his sister, a close relative, is frowned upon. Sorrowfully, he states, "When these [tears] are gone, / The woman will be out...I have a speech o' fire that fain would blaze, / but that this folly drowns it (V.i.187-89). Laertes believes crying to be foolish and womanly even if he knows that tears are a natural expression of deep sorrow in humans. It would seem that society would rather men be callous than vulnerable for a while and move on despite any and all harm – psychological or otherwise. This belief not only harms men, but it also provides a pillar that supports misogyny and erodes gender relations.

The cultural belief that valid emotions like sorrow are womanly presents itself again in a conversation among Hamlet, Gertrude, and Claudius. After Hamlet begins to express how dejected he is, Claudius tells him, "'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet, / To give these mourning duties to your father...But to persevere / In obstinate condolement is a course / Of impious stubbornness; 'tis unmanly grief" (I.ii.87-94). Shortly after this exchange, Hamlet famously uses the apostrophe: "Frailty, thy name is woman!" and with this, he begins his attack on women (I.ii.146). Often, what he says is hypocritical and may even denote Hamlet's impatience that it is socially acceptable for women to be weak and express their feelings and thoughts

publicly. Indeed, in his monologue, he says, "But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue"; what he is essentially saying is that he must suffer in silence, and one can guess that it is because it is not socially acceptable for men to express their suffering openly (I.ii.159). He begins to adopt a male persona, though his fake friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, can tell that he has to force himself to be courteous (III.i.11-12). From a psychoanalytical perspective, Hamlet faces anxieties from having to live up to his gender identity as a man. From a feminist perspective, the notion that women give in to their emotions because they are weak causes Hamlet to take out his frustrations on the women in his life rather than come to terms with the fact that he is suffering, and that it is part of being human to suffer and feel vulnerable until such time as a person heals.

Because of his introspective nature, Hamlet shows the reader more than any other character just how deep-seated beliefs about gender are. Indeed, the reader can see it in the way he treats the women in his life. Perhaps to make up for what he perceives to be his shortcomings, Hamlet becomes insensitive to Ophelia. In an attempt to figure out if his madness comes from feelings of love and rejection, Polonius has Ophelia meet with Hamlet while Polonius and Claudius eavesdrop on their conversation. During this conversation, however, all that Hamlet reveals is his deep disdain toward women. He tells Ophelia, "I have heard of your paintings well enough. God hath / given you one face, and you make yourselves another. You jig / and amble, and you lisp, you nickname God's creatures and / make your wantonness your ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on 't; it / hath made me mad" (III.i.142-46). He condemns women putting on makeup and changing the appearance of their faces. But again, what he does is consistent. Rather than wearing makeup, Hamlet continually changes his countenance and his behavior so that it does not match his attitudes, as he does with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. In his desire to be entirely unlike a woman, he ignores the fact that he puts on an act, not unlike what women do when they wear makeup to amplify their womanly physical attributes. In Hamlet's culture, it is acceptable for women to be their true selves, express their thoughts, and be indecisive, but it is not acceptable for him because he is a man.

The implication is that Hamlet represses and hides his emotions to fit into his role as a man, and holding repressed emotions as well as hiding behind personas can be incredibly difficult; it can cause a great deal of distress and damage to the psyche. It would have saved Hamlet and others so much sorrow, and it would have spared many lives if Hamlet had been allowed to grieve properly. As sure as death, emotions are part of our humanity. So, who knocked over the first domino?

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Citlalli Luna



"If he were beautiful/ As he is hideous now, and yet did dare/ To scowl
upon his Maker, well from him/ May all our mis'ry flow."

Inferno, Canto XXXIV, 32-35.



My rendition of Alexander Cabanel's *L'Ange Dechu*, 1847, was inspired by the quote above. The story of Lucifer's betrayal has been told countless times in countless ways, most expressing no empathy towards the fallen angel. Reading *Inferno*, it became apparent that various degrees of misery surrounded the characters in the epic-poem but also that Lucifer's misery was the most complex. I tried to capture the betrayal, the smouldering anger, and the hurt in my sketch.

It is easier to blur than to define. The gray areas that separate religions, ideas, and other philosophical constructs are hard to conceptualize; they are also difficult to represent artistically. Through the use of sketch pencils, charcoal, soft pastels, oil pastels, and very textured paper, I created a sketch that is both undefined yet strongly suggestive. I created a moment and some areas of conflicted emotion to bring attention to a morally ambiguous situation.

Camille Bradshaw

The Reception of *Frankenstein* through Conservative Lenses

Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus, has become one of the most read and discussed Gothic novels in the present time. Readers all around the world still study and theorize about the concepts first presented to audiences just over two hundred years ago. The story of the monster and the overreaching creator has been polarizing to many, prophetic to some, and tragically beautiful to most that have interacted with the tale. Despite its success today, *Frankenstein* was far from beloved when first published anonymously in 1818; many critics, including those that found some merit in the novel, did not think it deserved a second glance, let alone be celebrated in the long canon of literary history. The reception of *Frankenstein* is not a straightforward study with an easily defined response, but rather a look at multifaceted approaches to a controversial story. Several conflicting elements influenced the first wave of critics that reviewed Shelley's novel, yet the most dominant factor lies in the ceaseless tug of politics ever-present in early Victorian Great Britain. A close comparison of two conservative reviews, along with a glance at several published journals, reveals that much of the text's criticism aligns to form a greater picture of conservative values in Great Britain at the time of *Frankenstein's* publication.

To understand the opinions of the initial critics and make sense of their singular dislike of Shelley's first novel, a history of her family tree must be examined. One of the recurring criticisms of the novel is rooted in the anonymous nature of the original publication. Mary Shelley did not claim *Frankenstein* as her own until 1823 (Baldick 242), and the book was originally published with only a preface written by her husband, Percy Shelley, and a dedication to her father William Godwin (Shelley 4-6). Because these two prominent public figures with a shared surname were attached to the work, many critics latched onto the familiar names and assumed that Percy Shelley had authored *Frankenstein*. Although the anonymity is interesting, the real point of contention was with the dedication at the beginning of the novel: "To William Godwin, author of political justice, Caleb Williams, etc. These volumes are respectfully inscribed by the author" (Shelley 4). William Godwin is most famously remembered "as an early theorist of anarchy," and had already procured a reputation as a modern

political radical by the time of publication of *Frankenstein* (DeLucia 655). His dedication to “anti-authoritarian principles of political action,” general “disregard for institutional hierarchy,” and belief that educating the masses for political debate were strongly opposed British conservative ideals of the time (DeLucia 655). This historical basis lends itself to a more transparent analysis of the reception of Shelley’s first novel because a majority of the negative reviews were written by critics heavily invested in traditionalist British politics.

Magazine publishing became very popular in Great Britain during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with many startup publishers and few long-term successful magazines. The contributing authors in the early 1800s provided a variety of written work in order to reach the increasingly literate middle-class people (“History of Magazine Publishing”). The *Quarterly Review*, established by John Murray in 1809, was born out of a political desire for an increased Tory representation in the magazine publishing world, and it eventually became one of the most successful British journals ever published (Jones). The *Edinburgh Magazine*, also known as *Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany*, had a more ambiguous history. The March 1818 review on *Frankenstein* published in the journal was written by an anonymous author, yet the work conveys distinctly conservative Tory associated values. When compared to the overt traditionalist ideas presented by John Croker in *The Quarterly*, a disparaging reaction to Whig or progressive politics is made very clear in regard to Shelley’s forward-thinking societal themes and character dilemmas.

Chris Baldick, in his essay “The Reception of *Frankenstein*,” identifies the conservative attitude towards Godwin’s political and philosophical ideologies in order to explain some of the critics’ outraged responses: “. . . the only clue which readers had in 1818 about the anonymous author lay in the dedication to William Godwin. This was quite enough for the Tory *Quarterly Review* to damn it, while others were put on their guard” (Baldick 242-243). *Frankenstein*’s mere association with Godwin’s radical political ideas set some literary critics against the tale from the very start. For instance, John Croker, in the January 1818 edition of the *Quarterly Review*, claimed that the novel was intensely insensitive to human misery and argued that *Frankenstein* was essentially a failed, tone-deaf thought experiment that clumsily portrayed Godwin’s ‘wanderings of the intellect’” (Croker 218). The transparent interweaving of Godwin’s platform was also opposed in the March 1818 edition of *Edinburgh Magazine*, author unknown. In the second sentence of the review, the author proclaims that *Frankenstein* was “formed on the Godwinian manner, and has all the faults” (*Edinburgh Magazine* 231). Croker and the anonymous author attempted to undermine the originality of

by admonishing her unveiled reliance on Godwin's liberal ideals (although Shelley's identity was unknown to them at the time). The *Edinburgh* even proclaims that Shelley's commentary on culture, through the use of "monstrous conceptions," detracts from any type of message the novel was meant to reveal to its readers. Although Baldick's assessment of the negative reaction was accurate, Croker and *Edinburgh* denounce *Frankenstein* for far more than Godwin's apparent influence.

When separated from Godwin, both critics continued to find fault with *Frankenstein*; their dislike for the plot of the story and the somewhat irrational actions and motives of Shelley's characters are made clear in their reviews. *Edinburgh* leans into the argument that the novel simply attempted to accomplish too much, too quickly in regard to the plot of the tale. The author contrasts Shelley's work with Shakespeare's to emphasize that there is a correct way to have a fast-paced plot for entertainment purposes; he or she concludes this assessment by claiming that even the Bard knew when a textual work was too convoluted (*Edinburgh Magazine* 231-232). Although the author does acknowledge that there is beauty and potential in the novel, he firmly claims that whatever potential began to emerge was detracted from by "an unpracticed hand" (*Edinburgh Magazine* 236). Moreover, *The Literary Panorama* and *National Register* journal poked multiple holes in the plot as well as in character development choices: "The whole detail of the development of the creature's mind and faculties is full of these monstrous inconsistencies" ("Reception: 1818"). Continuing on, Croker takes a more extreme approach to the irrationality of the text by calling the language and events "insane," and remarks that only an author as "mad as the hero" could have conceived of such a narrative (218). It should also be noted that even critics that demonstrated a more positive reception of *Frankenstein*, such as Scott in his review in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, also remarked on improbabilities that occurred within the story (230). One final description from Croker on the unrealistic nature of Shelley's writing, as "paroxysms of genius and fits of expression," leads into another similarity found amongst the conservative criticism: their strong dislike for the author's reliance on evoking dramatic and emotional reactions from readers (Croker 218). These complaints about an irrational plot and a lack of authentic character development align with the conservative rejection of radical political movements, much like the platform of societal anarchy proposed by Godwin in earlier years.

In a similar form of opposition, an evident dislike for the novel's uninhibited fervor in response to political platforms was expressed by the conservative critics. More specifically, the overabundance, or labeled misuse, of Shelley's appeal to emotion invoked a clear distaste from the *Quarterly Review*, *Edinburgh Magazine*, and

also non-conservative reviewers who did appreciate the author's written dramatics in such close proximity to a societal reform objective. For example, *Knight's Quarterly* deemed that "the faults of *Frankenstein* were occasional extravagance and over-writing..." (*Knight's Quarterly* 238). Croker adamantly agreed with this evaluation in his own disapproval of the flowery and empty language: "nonsense decked out with circumstances and clothed in language highly terrific.... But still there is something tremendous in the unmeaning hollowness of its sounds, and the vague obscurity of its images" (218). Croker is describing a sort of emotional exhaustion caused by the dramatics of Shelley's writing. He claims that this overly theatrical attempt to draw out emotion will leave audiences with a numbing and resounding hollowness and that her reliance on intense emotions "fatigues the feelings without interesting the understanding; it gratuitously harasses the heart, and wantonly adds to the store, already too great of painful sensations" (218-219). Comparatively, *Edinburgh* more simply described the emotional waves presented through language and plot as grotesque and exaggerated attempts to convey meaning (*Edinburgh Magazine* 231-237). All three of these critics illustrated for readers the literary struggle in navigating Shelley's text and deciphering her deliberate decision to communicate themes through flowery and emotionally taxing language. Their unspoken argument is that Shelley's misuse of pathos detracts from the overarching textual societal messages.

Ironically, the primary cause of *Frankenstein's* condemnation for both the *Quarterly Review* and *Edinburgh Magazine* is ultimately the lack of morality, or real tangible meaning, despite the novel's appeal to the shockingly unnatural. Croker and *Edinburgh* seem to use the term morality in an interchangeable sense with their idea of a successful purpose. Croker emphasizes Shelley's failure to do anything meaningful with the themes except to entertain immature audiences, but that, even that, is done poorly: "it includes no lesson of conduct, manners, or morality; it cannot mend, and will not even amuse its readers, unless their taste have been deplorably vitiated..." (218). His declaration that only an unrefined, or truly tasteless, audience could possibly enjoy the story of *Frankenstein* leaves little room for a differing interpretation of his opinion. He then concludes the review with a reflection on the author's motive, in which he expresses that the author must be sick of head and heart to write such a negatively horrendous tale that will only bring misery to readers (Croker 219). The anonymous *Edinburgh* author also grappled with a lack of morality by claiming that the concepts of the book bordered on "impiety." He claimed that it was "outrageously improbable" that there could be a worthwhile message without reverence for the traditional (*Edinburgh Magazine* 231). The author leaves the audience on a similar

note as Croker does by arguing that *Frankenstein* was not successful in its attempt to convert or even persuade a greater audience towards its radical ideals and therefore, “we do not well see why it should have been written.... It is somewhat too long, grave, and laborious, - and some of our highest and most reverential feelings receive a shock from the conception on which it turns, so as to produce a painful and bewildered state of mind while we pursue it” (*Edinburgh Magazine* 236). In another review, published anonymously in *The British Critic* in April 1818, a critic reiterates these same claims: “We need scarcely say, that these volumes have neither principle, object, nor moral; the horror which abounds in them is too grotesque and bizarre ever to approach near the sublime, and when we did not hurry over the pages in disgust, we sometimes paused to laugh outright; and yet we suspect, that the diseased and wandering imagination, which has stepped out of all legitimate bounds...” (“Reception: 1818”). These grand concluding statements from conservative critics leave readers with the belief that reading *Frankenstein* can only amount to a revolting, aimless, and immoral experience. This seems to be yet another example of how religion, or at the very least orthodox values, and conservative politics go hand in hand.

The ways in which the conservative criticisms aligned communicate the significant role their traditionalist values played in their critique of the novel. Their conventional ideologies prevented them from simply enjoying *Frankenstein* as a work of art, as they relentlessly fixated on minor flaws on the surface of the text, and ultimately, critics were unable to recognize the value in Shelley’s radical concepts. Regardless of the initial negative reception, the unorthodox tragedy has managed to live on due to society’s progression and ability to see past political motives. Modern criticism centered around *Frankenstein* has moved forward and tends to reflect the larger revisionist reception of the novel rather than just its political themes and affiliations. Over time, critics, universities, and independent readers have acknowledged the novel’s merit, and Shelley’s first published work has prevailed as an integral piece of the classical literary canon.

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Kelly Damian

Walton on Ice

Only five years after its publication, *Frankenstein* was adapted for the stage. Like the monster, who, after being bludgeoned by the many rejections and cruelties of life, morphed into a being unrecognizable to himself, the story of *Frankenstein* in the current popular imagination bears only the faintest resemblance to Mary Shelley's original creation. Of the many changes made to the story, the swiftest was the cutting out of the novel's polar narrative in Richard Brinsley Peake's stage adaptation in 1823. In repeated retellings, the polar frame makes occasional cameos, but in general it has disappeared from the fabric of the story. If early adapters saw Walton and his polar exploration as a mere appendage to the body of the story, then what was Shelley's purpose in including him? From a structural standpoint, Walton and his quixotic quest to the North Pole do not serve much purpose in driving the novel forward. And while the final scene is quite dramatic, Shelley could have just as easily set it at the glacier that provides the setting for the middle of the novel. In recent literary criticism and analysis, there is disagreement among scholars regarding Shelley's purpose in including Walton and his journey north. Did Shelley include Walton for the express purpose of criticizing the imperial mindset of nineteenth-century England, or are the Polar North and Walton himself simply the events of the day working their influence on a writer? In what follows, I explore the validity of both of these positions and argue for Shelley's imperial critique.

1815 marked the beginning of Britain's imperial century. By 1914 the crown would add about 10 million square miles and 400 million people to its territory. The country would become an empire. Walton, on his journey to the North Pole and imbued with a heady mix of ego and delusion, is very much a man of this moment. He is a hearty explorer, ready to make new geographic and scientific discoveries. He anticipates gaining information about the magnetic pole "that require only this voyage to render their seeming eccentricities consistent for-ever" (7). Should the discovery of the pole not pan out, Walton's back-up plan is to discover a northwest passage to the East, something Europeans had been searching for since the time of Columbus. In his

letter to his sister, he swoons over this potential revelation and thinks of “the inestimable benefit which I shall confer on all mankind to the last generation” (8). The use of “I” is telling. It is not the coveted Northwest passage which will benefit the world, but rather Walton himself. In essence, Walton’s to do list reads: 1. Make remarkable discovery. 2. Go down in history. Nor does Walton struggle with doubts or questions of self-worth. “Do I not deserve to accomplish some great purpose,” he asks of his sister (9). In not bothering with the question mark, he answers his own question. Through Walton, Shelley has created for the reader a man with a rather peculiar, and some could argue dangerous, mixture of arrogance and innocence.

In choosing the life of the explorer, Walton has opted for fame over fortune. As he lays out his personal ambitions, he explains that he “preferred glory to every enticement that wealth placed in my path” (9). Walton is a gentleman whose inheritance allows him the luxury of not working, yet he opts to spend six years on whaling ships to toughen up and train himself for this journey. Inspired by the stories of his youth, this is no childish pursuit for him, rather a serious endeavor. However, it cannot be ignored that for Walton, questing is a luxury, not a necessity, which puts him in contrast with the hired men. For Walton’s crew, the journey to the pole is a job, not a mission worth dying for. As Walton bemoans at the end, they are “unsupported by ideas of glory and honour” (155). Walton, however, is quite supported by glorious ideals, and declares that he would rather die than return home having not met his goal. Thus, in his social rank, access to capital, and desire for notoriety, Walton is the quintessential English explorer.

Some historical critics see Walton, with his total lack of humility and a tenuous grip on reality, as Shelley’s attempt to voice her opposition to the arrogance of imperialism. Michelle Levy, in “Discovery and the Domestic Affections in Coleridge and Shelley,” offers a theory of what might have influenced Shelley as the author delineated the character of Walton. Levy argues that Shelley was “vociferously opposed to unregulated and irresponsible venturing into the unknown” (694). For Shelley, Levy argues, the inevitable endgame of discovery was “conquest and exploitation” (694). By the time Shelley wrote *Frankenstein*, the negative effects of kingdom-conquering were clear. One need only look at the malicious triangle of the Atlantic slave trade and the decimation of Native American populations in North and South America for evidence of the dangers of a hungry empire. The monster himself takes up this point when he refers to *Ruins of Empires* and weeps over the massive deaths of native people after contact with European explorers. With Napoleon defeated at Waterloo, the English government launched a campaign to use the surfeit warships

to explore the polar region (Beck 24). John Barrow, secretary of the Admiralty, worked with the publisher John Murray at the *Quarterly Review* to publish many series of Arctic publications, which drew the public into the drama of these frosty journeys. In "Writing the Disaster: Franklin and Frankenstein," Adriana Craciun corroborates the idea that the presence of Walton is "addressing this post-Napoleonic climate of nationalistic hubris" (437). It is known from Shelley's journals that she read the *Quarterly* and Craciun argues that "Frankenstein's polar frame...no doubt gained momentum from Barrow's first Arctic account in October 1816" (438). According to Craciun, Shelley observed the phenomena of exploration at that time and reflected it back to the reading public in her novel. Other scholars agree with Craciun. In *White Horizon: The Arctic in the Nineteenth-Century British Imagination*, Jen Hill asserts that Walton's journey to the North Pole is "a response to the well-documented preparations of the 1818 Arctic expeditions...polar exploration, although carried out under the aegis of science, was also- and perhaps primarily- a project of masculine imperial and national identity building" (56). After years of war in Europe, England did not experience a thoughtful return to peace and family life as some scholars say that Shelley would support, but rather hustled its young men out the door before they had too much time to get comfortable at home. Craciun and Hill contextualize the polar frame of *Frankenstein* within the current events of England during this time. Concerned about the grip exploration had on the English, Shelley painted the portrait of a young explorer drunk on ambition and storming toward a goal. For these critics, Walton is placed in the story to shine a light on the folly of exploration without humility.

But what makes historical criticism tricky is that one can only theorize over the intentions of authors of the past. The idea that Walton's story is a critique of John Barrow's first Arctic account in the *Quarterly* is refuted by Janice Cavell in "The Sea of Ice and the Icy Sea: The Arctic Frame of *Frankenstein*." Cavell posits that "it is questionable whether the Arctic frame was intended as an unequivocal rebuke of imperialist geopolitical projects" (305). She disputes the timeline forwarded by others who equate the addition of the polar frame with the publication of Barrow's piece in the *Quarterly*. In fact, she notes that the October 1817 issue, which described the Admiralty's intentions in the Arctic, was published in February 1818, a month after *Frankenstein's* debut. Cavell uses Shelley's journal as evidence to support her claim, and "the first Arctic-related issue definitively known to have been read by the Shelley's is the one dated January 1818" (297). For Cavell, Shelley was not making a political statement about Britain's push into the Arctic, but was instead influenced by current

events to include the Arctic as a setting. This, Cavell argues, is a testament to “the Arctic’s place in Romantic literary culture” (298). In Cavell’s view, the Arctic held sway on Shelley’s imagination just as it did on her fellow Englishmen. From this perspective Walton provides a view into the attitudes of the time, but with a more neutral, observational stance rather than the indictment of the culture of exploration that other scholars see. Cavell also briefly argues that there is no evidence that Shelley’s contemporaries considered the novel to be a critique of the Admiralty expeditions (304); an interesting point, but one that only gets mentioned in passing in her article. An in-depth reception study could investigate whether or not this assertion is true.

If there is not universal agreement that Walton is a critique of chest-thumping explorers, then could it be that he is the image of a different sort of man? Another view of Walton is as the portrait of the travel writer willing to go to any lengths to get a juicy story. Indeed, Walton is a writer first and explorer second. His first pursuit as an adult was writing. He says, “I became a poet, and for one year lived in a Paradise of my own creation” (8). Walton, it would seem, is not one to set reasonable goals. Indeed, at the outset of his writing career he imagined for himself “a niche in the temple where the names of Homer and Shakespeare are consecrated” (8). (Interestingly enough, for a man looking to go down in history, he chose two writers whose identities are most disputed.) Walton describes himself as a failure of a poet, but never describes the nature of his failure. Did he fail to write good poems, or did he fail to get notoriety for his work? Based on the reference to Homer and Shakespeare, the most likely argument is that Walton quit poetry because he failed to get famous. Enter the travel narrative. “This manuscript will doubtless afford you the greatest pleasure,” Walton assures his sister (18). Walton’s confidence that his sister (and, one can infer) the reading public, will take pleasure in his polar adventures is not unwarranted. In 1823, after the publication of *Frankenstein*, but firmly within the same era, Arctic explorer John Franklin published the hugely successful *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea*, a tale of “starvation, murder, cannibalism, and madness tailored to please an audience already schooled in Gothic romances, captivity narratives, shipwreck accounts, early ethnography, and travel writings” (Craciun 435). In other words, if a man were looking to become famous, he could pin his hopes quite reasonably on achieving notoriety with the publication of an action-packed travel narrative. While it is a helpful narrative device to make Walton a writer, some historical critics believe that Walton’s love of stories and prior ambitions of being a famous writer take on new significance when put into the context of the stories of exploration and adventure that

proliferated in nineteenth-century England.

Historical critics argue that Shelley's decision to make Walton a writer was because she was concerned about the positive feedback loop between discovery and conquest narratives. "Desire for discovery and conquest was profoundly inflamed by printed accounts of discovery and conquest," Levy observes, "by liberating the imagination from the constraints of prudence and suffering, narratives of discovery tended to promise excitement and glory without consequences" (694, 695). This observation is born out in the character of Walton, who consumed travel narratives from a young age, then went out to enact one, which culminates in the production of a new travel narrative to fuel others. Levy argues that Shelley was aware that "print culture enabled and encouraged British imperialism" (695). One could argue that Shelley, as a writer, would have first-hand knowledge of the power of stories to inculcate values and inspire actions. Hill makes the case that "Shelley uses the polar narrative in *Frankenstein* to rewrite masculinist projects of scientific exploration—as well as to critique the related aesthetics of male Romantic poets—by pushing the limits of Walton's narrative to collapse" (55). By the end, "prudence and suffering" save Walton. Several of his crew are dead, and Walton's crew beg for their lives and demand that he turn around. "I cannot lead them unwillingly to danger, and I must return," Walton tells Victor Frankenstein (156). At this point in the story Walton's storybook fantasy of the intrepid explorer must confront the reality of men facing a pointless death. Indeed, some critics closely align real and fictional explorer. "Walton's eleventh-hour return when faced with open mutiny among a foreign crew closely parallels Franklin's resistance to turning back, and I suggest that real and fictional explorer shared the same motivation in returning short of their stated goal: i.e., to publish their narratives" (Craciun 456). Shelley positions Walton in the Arctic with a head full of stories and a heart full of ambition. Are his actions laudable or reckless? The answer depends on whether you are one of the frozen corpses who "found a grave amidst this scene of desolation," or if you are a reader safe at home, hungrily turning the pages (154).

Later adapters of *Frankenstein* treated the polar narrative as an optional part of the story, and many chose to excise it entirely. But writing is not accidental, and Shelley went through the trouble to include both Walton and the unknown polar region in her original text. These elements of the novel are not narrative window dressing. When one considers the effort that goes into constructing a novel, this lends more weight to the argument that Walton is an explicit critique of imperial hubris. The story of *Frankenstein* is one that has lasted, granted, in many mutations, throughout

centuries. This is the work of a writer who had something to say about the course of modern events, not the result of a mere transcriptionist for the moment.

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Bat-Ami Gordin

Imaginary Science in *Frankenstein*; or, *The Modern Prometheus*

Science in the early nineteenth century attracted not only inventors of new technology but also channeled the creative muses of Romantic writers. In 1817, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley wrote *Frankenstein*, an iconic tragedy detailing the backlash of unrestrained ego and science. In this novel, the protagonist, Victor Frankenstein, collects dead body parts to birth "The Creature." Although life arising from death is not real science, *Frankenstein* is an emotional response to scientific discovery: a commentary on social development that comes with change. *Frankenstein* is the product of imaginary science, the same creative process that brings forth innovative, civilization-changing technology.

Critics, such as Anne K. Mellor and Sharon Ruston, spell out the history of both chemical and electrical advancements preceding *Frankenstein's* publication. However, it is not prevalent to see post-1817 scientific discoveries analyzed and then applied to Shelley's ingenious foreshadowing. For example, it would be inappropriate to attribute Shelley's fictional science to an expertise in electricity. In her narrative, "there are 'instruments of life' and there is a 'spark of being,' but no lightning, no Galvanic fluid" (Houe 95). Shelley would have known that the Ancient Egyptians were familiar with electricity, and that the science of electricity was not discussed until c1600 when William Gilbert coined the new Latin word *electricus*, from the Greek word for electron, meaning "amber" ("Timeline Of Physical Chemistry"). She was familiar with the fact that in the eighteenth century, vacuum tubes were created, Benjamin Franklin conducted his kite experiments, insulators and conductors were discovered, and Alessandro Volta constructed the first reliable electrostatic battery. Most important to *Frankenstein* is that Luigi Galvani discovered bioelectricity, the force that moves muscles. This generated the term "galvanism" which interested both Mary and Percy Shelley. Thus, "Galvanism" is, "often taken by scholars to be Victor's means for animating his Creature...Galvanism was of course practiced by experimenters and showmen such as Luigi Galvani" (Fairclough 269). No one in Shelley's time could imagine how electricity would be used later in their century and beyond. A twenty-first century reader must not only take all this into consideration but should also realize that

mass electricity distribution was unknown to Shelley.

Since “scientists” of the early 1800’s had primitive knowledge of electricity and electrical engineering was not even in a fetal stage, Shelley had to rely not only on interesting stories she had heard but also on her imagination. For example, in *Frankenstein*, Victor explains that his father “constructed a small electrical machine and exhibited a few experiments; he made also a kite, with a wire and string, which drew down that fluid from the clouds” (24). Many scholars believe that “the kite and key is reproduced by Victor Frankenstein’s father” (Rieger 469) “with a little help from Benjamin Franklin’s *Experiments and Observations on Electricity* (1751)” (Peterfreund 81). Although Victor was endowed with Shelley’s interests, the character, like the author, could never precisely illustrate how he applied scientific technique.

For Shelly, electricity was magic. When she sought out Percy at “Garnerin’s lecture on electricity,” she most likely stumbled on that day’s version of a Las Vegas magic show (Feldman and Scott-Kilvert 56). It was not until a decade later that George Ohm established the relationship between current and voltage in a conductor, Faraday discovered electromagnetic induction (Halliday et al 593), and Kirchhoff Laws established that “charge and energy can neither be created nor destroyed” (Nahin 128). In 1873, James Clerk Maxwell unified magnetism and electricity and introduced Maxwell’s Equations (Halliday et al 593). The Shelleys and their friends never imagined the proper movement of electrons nor the oscillating electric fields as described by Maxwell and his equations. In 1843, imaginary numbers were discovered. In 1893, George Steinmetz revealed that “the double frequency vector product...brings us outside the limits of algebra” and showed how complex numbers (numbers with real and imaginary components) could substitute trigonometry in electrical engineering equations (Petroianu). These simpler calculations brought about a boom in the electrical engineering specialty.

The Hollywood trope for *Frankenstein* depicts the “monster” rising within a décor of electrical devices. This concept develops from but one word, “spark”: “With an anxiety...I might infuse a *spark* of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet... I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs” (41, emphasis added). In 1817, “vital force” defined how things live and grow. Thus, to Shelley, the word “spark,” along with the concept of “vitality” were the key primary life driving forces. Shelley believed that “vitality, like electricity, might be used to reanimate a dead human being” (Shelley and Hunter n.p.). However, much of her foresight into electricity was imagination, not fact. Electricity in the 1810’s would have provided insufficient electro-volts (eV) to reanimate dead cells,

and Shelley must have had an alternative life creating science in mind.

Shelley's resourcefulness also involved the newest classifications of substances and the formation of new branches of chemistry because "new reports surfaced almost daily" (Ruston 255). Victor reflects Shelley's views and describes his preoccupation with chemistry as follows: "that branch of natural philosophy in which the greatest improvements have been and may be made" (31); this field of inquiry, he says, became his "sole occupation" (31). Chemistry was the focus of Victor's studies, and according to James Rieger, "Frankenstein's chemistry is switched-on magic, souped-up alchemy, the electrification of Agrippa and Paracelsus," but when describing the first opening of the creature's eyes, Shelley "skips the science" (Hindle 30). Of course, Shelly skips the science because the science did not yet exist. What she and Percy did read was *Davy's Chemistry*, by a guest, Humphrey Davy, to the home of Shelly's father (Hindle 30), and they realized that chemistry "is related to those intimate actions of bodies upon each other" (Ruston 257). This observation represents the relationship of inanimate objects versus life creating substances.

So, is Victor's magic "spark" of life chemistry, electricity, or both? Shelley intentionally "omitted to name the causal agent of the animation of the creature" (Houe 96). Fortunately, today there are experiments that can answer these questions. In 2009, Powner, Gerland, and Sutherland of Manchester University synthesized activated pyrimidine ribonucleotides. In other words, they made the chemical constituents of RNA, a single strand of the DNA double helix. A more popular term would be the "building blocks of life." The experimenters called this substance "pre-biotic feedstock" (Powner et al.). Thus, Shelley's vision was, in a sense, steered by Davy's archaic, but authentic work. Within the scope of their experiments, the Manchester scientists found that strong alkaline conditions were necessary for the chemical process to occur. They had a regimen of rotating between neutral and alkaline environments, utilizing various biochemical reactions that are known to occur with alcohol (Powner et al.). This fits in with the knowledge and beliefs of Shelley, and thus Victor: "Chemistry is a science that incorporates not only the structures of inorganic compounds but also the functions and even *vitality* of living beings" (Fairclough 269, my emphasis). The Manchester University Experiment (MUE) utilized both organic and inorganic compounds. Since alcohol was produced from non-living plants, Romantic writers would not have been able to recognize that alcohol is an organic substance. When *Frankenstein* was published, the alcohol the Shelleys loved would not have been part of the "vital force." Had they or their friends contemplated the use of alcohol in a fictional science experiment, they would have undoubtedly produced

humorous fiction. In 1828, Friedrich Wöhler discovered that “by heating an aqueous solution of the inorganic salt ammonium cyanate, urea was produced” (Routh et al 198). The synthetic creation of this organic compound “dealt a severe blow to the ‘vital force’” (198) theory which was, as mentioned previously, an essential force Shelley believed could flame the animation process.

To “spark” their experiment, MUE experimenters did not use extreme amounts of power, such as enough power for a flash to be seen from an aircraft 30,000 feet above sea level, as evidenced by fusion reactor experiments. MUE initially used X-rays to discover the crystalline structure of the primordial molecules but learned X-rays were also useful in dispelling the soup of unwanted pyrimidine nucleosides and nucleotides (Powner et al.). Radiation is a scientific process not historically used until 1895. One would think that this would require some sort of electrical induction equivalent to that of a lightning strike, enough energy to power 56 town houses for a day, or 120 keV (Dvorak). Incidentally, low dose x-rays are one thousand times less potent than a powerful lightning strike, indicating that lightning would contain more than enough radiation and power to spark life. This concept is such a popular twentieth century meme that it is the overall reanimation concept of horror movie producers. However, Shelley only alludes to Victor’s obsession with lighting: “I eagerly inquired of my father the nature and origin of thunder and lightning. He replied, ‘Electricity’” (24). Thus, as her creativity explores the impacts of testing the unknown, Mary Shelley’s ability to postulate the effects of lightning is not the central component of her imaginary science.

In Charles E. Robinson’s classic introduction to the *Frankenstein* text, he states, “Despite these endorsements of chemistry and natural philosophy in her novel, Mary realized that science could be abused, as is certainly evident in Victor’s reckless and selfish experiments, which do not account for their consequences” (qtd in Shelley xxvii). Ultimately, this is what the wisdom of the novel explores. Victor stitched together his knowledge of both chemistry and alchemy, to stitch together the monster which resulted in Shelley’s suggestion “that we are all monsters stitched together from the texts that we have read” (Baumann and Mitchell 15). And as monsters, the author, the readers, and the protagonist all have the tendency to turn their minds to both creation and destruction. In his “The Monstrous Body of Knowledge in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*” Alan Rauch discusses, “what I hope to make clear is that, for Shelley, the moral integrity of the scientist has everything to do with the viability of knowledge” (228). Unfortunately, Victor was not trained in risk assessment: “Having read the alchemists in seclusion, and followed their practice of working in seclusion,

Frankenstein has no social context for his science" (Rauch 235). Victor's mistakes foreshadow the blunders of innovative scientists and entrepreneurs of the early and middle part of the twentieth century.

With no moral guidance, these creatives generated pollution and nuclear waste without speculating the consequences of these science by-products. Groundbreaking science, technology and writing all require genius and creativity, but each needs to be harnessed within stringent ethical standards or the human community may be exposed to dangerous consequences. Concepts, devices, and words are all equally revolutionary and equally dangerous. To Shelley, at a time when natural philosophy was morphing into science, there must have been a blur between alchemy and chemistry, between science and magic, and thus, between the supernatural and complex natural processes. Victor "opts to direct all of his science in the creation of a separate and distinct body of knowledge. The monster, as the incarnation of that knowledge, enters the world without introduction" (Rauch 236-7). Since electricity was not clearly understood in both a quantitative and qualitative sense, and chemistry had not delineated between the organic and the inorganic, the details of Frankenstein's scientific discovery remain outside the scope of modern scientific theory, and Shelley elegantly makes an excuse for Victor's lack of science education, stating, "Some accident prevented my attending these lectures until the course was nearly finished" (Shelley et al 24). Victor fails in radically changing science and, instead, brings about ambiguous alchemical transformations that wreak havoc on his family, community, and society. His initial interest in the work of alchemists is more commonly seen in gothic novels since his findings are based not on science, but on metaphysics and the occult. But with her knowledge and imagination, Shelley is the one who created something new and immortal.

In *Writer's Guide to Creating Science Fiction*, the authors compare imaginary science, "faster-than-light-starships, time machines, antigravity fields" to *wrong science*. Wrong science contains "outright errors that will ruin the credibility of a story" (Ochoa and Osier 8). Within science-fiction, as long as the author can muster a reason for the "wrong science" to work, it becomes "imaginary science." Mary Shelley set out to create a gothic/romantic story about unleashing a demon. It became a time-honored opus commonly dubbed "the first science fiction" novel. Although *Frankenstein* is not based on what today we consider real science, but what we might label as metaphysics, occultism, and alchemy, it falls into the category of science fiction because Shelley's fantastic creativity is considered "imagined science" and because it critiques the ramifications of carelessly unbridling the undiscovered. It is

never clear which science Shelly used to animate the creature. However, neither is it ambiguous that the intent of her “imaginary science” is to highlight the necessity for planning, risk management and ethical cogitation before committing to a science project.

Frankenstein is the product of imaginary science, the same creative process that brings forth innovative, civilization-changing technology. Shelley’s vision was steered by Davy’s archaic, but authentic work and by a very early knowledge of electricity. Although she could not imagine electric fields, electrons zipping through conductors, or how carbon and hydrogen bonds react in living things, she could still foreshadow the consequences of reckless high-risk scientists, and impulsive pioneering industrialists. Shelley loved science. *Frankenstein* is not an admonishment to scientists. It should be taken as a moral obligation for scientists to not experiment from the ego, but toward the betterment of humanity. Shelley used the tools available to her and a lot of imaginary science then sprinkled a little commentary on unintended cause and effect. This form of commentary has carried into the proper definition of science fiction of today. With imaginary science, Shelley speculates on the effects of using an illusory science to play God, generate simulated life, and precipitate havoc and misery within an established community. Meanwhile, her imagination and genius implore scientists, technologists, and even fellow writers to think carefully before unleashing a monster.

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Marissa Patton

Rhetorical Analysis of Chapter Six of *This Present Darkness* by Frank E. Peretti

This Present Darkness by Frank E. Peretti is a horror and fantasy novel published in 1986 by Crossway Books. *This Present Darkness* demonstrates contemporary views on angels, demons, prayer, and spiritual warfare, as demons and angels interact and struggle for control of the citizens in the small town of Ashton. In Chapter 6 of the novel, the eclectic characters Hank and Marshall withstand a demon attack of extreme proportions, so intense that both men nearly die. Chapter 6 of *This Present Darkness* creates feelings of fear through the author's use of diction, metaphors and similes, repetition and alliteration, sentence structure, noun style, and voiced style.

Peretti uses diction as a method of creating fear. He uses informal and colloquial diction to make a personal connection with readers that, like a predator lures its prey, draws them comfortably through the exposition of the chapter until the diction suddenly changes and they are completely lost in fear. Peretti begins the chapter with the most casual and predictable phrase of all: "It was a dark, rainy night . . ." This casual speech continues, examples of which are organized in the compilation below:

It had been a lousy day anyway.

His ears were still ringing with the conversation he'd had with Alf Brummel.

Funny how every lump in the mattress seems so much more lumpy when you're upset.

But sleep finally does come

His pulse began to pound in his ears.

After Hank experiences a horrendous nightmare of running from danger and seeing and tasting blood, Peretti's diction changes. His words become sinister, grotesque and no longer colloquial:

Did he really see it? It was an *eerie* projection in midair, a glowing painting on black velvet. Right above the bed, so close he could smell *sulfurous* breath, a *hideous mask* of a face hovered, *contorting in grotesque movements* as it *spit out vicious words* he couldn't understand.

Outside of Hank's dream world, the real world is even more terrifying. Later in

the chapter, Marshall experiences similar nightmares with similarly casual diction. Peretti writes about how Marshall grabs a bat and moves quietly down the dark hallway, taking deep breaths before quickly turning on the lights. Every word is written matter-of-factly with minute attention to detail; in effect, the narration becomes a controlled, systematic list of actions performed by one man. Peretti includes a strange reassurance after the terror when Marshall walks outside and, “for some reason suddenly felt safer.” Yet this is false hope, an absolute perfect placement of such, because Peretti throws the diction-curveball again by interrupting the casual colloquialism with fear-driven words:

Outside the house, lying low in the evergreens and hedges, Tal and his company watched as demons—at least forty according to Tal’s count—played havoc with Marshall’s mind and spirit. *They swooped like deadly black swallows in and out of the house, through the rooms, around and around Marshall, screaming taunts and blasphemies, and playing with and ever increasing his fears. Tal kept careful watch for the dreaded Rafar*; but the Ba-al wasn’t among this wild group. There could be no doubt, however, that Rafar had sent them.

The controlled list of actions performed by Marshall is a stark contrast to the loud, chaotic, and disruptive thrall of words that Peretti throws onto the page. His method is extremely effective in instilling fear, and Peretti uses this diction to its greatest advantage with the inclusion of similes and metaphors.

A second persuasive move is Peretti’s use of metaphors and similes to accentuate feelings of fear. Below is a list of metaphors and similes Peretti uses to his utmost advantage:

Metaphors
his dreams began to go sour
the sickies
Now somebody’s gonna have mush for brains.
But his guts were doing a square dance under his ribs.
either you’ve really lost a screw
He became a trapped animal.
“She’s poof! Gone!”
“Keep it level.”
“I’m a veteran!” (not literally)
give Satan a real run for his money

She really missed that fire in his eyes.

"And now Rafar has helped to awaken you again!"

Similes

Hank's eyes opened like a spring trap.

he felt like he'd been struck by a very heavy blow.

He peered like some kind of stalking fugitive through the archway.

Locking the door behind him was just like shutting himself in a dark closet.

They swooped like deadly black swallows

It was like falling into a bottomless well of blackness and terror

The hairs on the back of his neck bristled as if with static electricity.

Flocks of demons came thundering and flooding out of the house like bats

Marshall sighed, feeling himself shrink like a punctured inner tube.

"Marshall, it sounded like a New Year's Eve party in there."

The metaphors are direct, in other words, they do not beat around the bush. Peretti does not misuse or exploit his metaphors because he would lose the innate sense of terror the entire chapter invokes. His metaphors are guttural because he knows that a single bad metaphor has consequences and a good one will terrify both his characters and his readers. There is nothing like the metaphors of a trapped animal that is scratching and crying to get out, nor is there anything like having mush for brains. Similar to his metaphors, most, if not all, of Peretti's similes have a negative connotation. The images his similes suggest are graphic and repulsive, a stark contrast to common cliché. Peretti uses similes to his advantage by contrasting every action with a destructive, terrifying subject: a spring trap, a heavy blow, a stalking fugitive, a dark closet, a bottomless well, a flock of bats; all of these are stark images that scream terror.

Peretti uses repetition and alliteration to emphasize words and ideas to make them as frightening as possible. Peretti's repetition is not obvious, but once discovered the narration becomes extremely realistic, while reinforcing the main emotion of fear readers feel throughout the chapter. The following paragraphs emphasize repeated pronouns:

Did *he* really see it? It was an eerie projection in midair, a glowing painting on velvet. Right above the bed, so close *he* could smell sulfurous breath, a hideous mask of a

face hovered, contorting in grotesque movements as it spit out vicious words *he* couldn't understand.

Hank's eyes opened like a sprung trap. *He* thought *he* could still see the face, just fading away, but instantly *he* felt like *he'd* been struck by a very heavy blow to *his* chest; *his* heart began to race and pound like it would burst through *his* ribs. *He* could feel *his* pajamas and the bedsheets sticking to *him*, drenched in sweat. He lay there panting for breath, waiting for his heart to calm down, for the stark terror to go away, but nothing changed and *he* couldn't make it change.

You're just having a nightmare, *he* kept telling himself, but *he* couldn't seem to wake up. *He* purposely opened *his* eyes wide and looked around the darkened room, even though part of him wanted to regress back to childhood and just hide under the covers until the ghosts and monsters and burglars went away.

These three paragraphs alone include 21 personal pronouns, 13 of which are *he*, 6 are *his*, and 2 are *him*. The repetition of personal pronouns creates a deeper connection to Hank. Peretti effectively uses pronouns to place Hank inside his own mind; he does not refer to himself by name and he is completely lost in his own terror, as seen when he talks to himself. While Peretti literally writes "for the stark terror to go away," that phrase does not take away from Hank or his situation. Also, the phrases of his actions are a short, clipped list much like a person acts when in the midst of anger: he pants for breath, he waits, nothing changes, he talks to himself, he can't seem to wake up, he opens his eyes, he looks around, and so on. In another paragraph, Peretti repeats the word "nobody" three times, and each time the word is said by Marshall. Marshall is clearly lying when he says "nobody" because there was a drove of demons in his house. Moreover, the word "nobody" reflects fear because readers understand there is somebody in Marshall's house, yet he denies it three times; there is no plausible deniability, and so the sense of fear for Marshall and as a whole is heightened.

Peretti creates a rhythmic flow of Simple, Compound, and Compound-Complex sentences which heighten the sense of fear and danger in his descriptive narration. The diagram below labels three different sentence types and sentence patterns that Peretti uses to his advantage:

Did he really see it? *Simple*

It was an eerie projection in midair, a glowing painting on black velvet. *Simple*
Right above the bed, so close he could smell sulfurous breath, a hideous mask of a face hovered, contorting in grotesque movements as it spit out vicious words he

couldn't understand. *Simple*

Hank's eyes opened like a sprung trap. *Simple*

He thought he could still see the face, just fading away, but instantly he felt like he'd been struck by a very heavy blow to his chest; his heart began to race and pound like it would burst through his ribs. *Compound-Complex*

He could feel his pajamas and the bedsheets sticking to him, drenched in sweat.

Simple

He lay there panting for breath, waiting for his heart to calm down, for the stark terror to go away, but nothing changed and he couldn't make it change. *Compound*

You're just having a nightmare, he kept telling himself, but he couldn't seem to wake up. *Compound*

He purposely opened his eyes wide and looked around the darkened room, even though part of him wanted to regress back to childhood and just hide under the covers until the ghosts and monsters and burglars went away. *Compound-Complex*

In this excerpt, the sentences types parallel a force of action; a short simple sentence models a quickly spring trap, and a long compound-complex sentence models a man who, suddenly startled awake by a sudden sound, fights the urge to drift back to sleep with the past memories of childhood monsters under his bed. Peretti's sentence structure and his aura of fear work together in a synchronized pendulum swing. The more brazen Hank becomes, the longer and more detailed the sentences are; in contrast, the more afraid Hank becomes the shorter and less detailed the sentences are. As a result, the audience is thrown into a tailspin of action and start to read with the same throbbing, aching heartbeat as Hank.

A fifth persuasive move Peretti makes is his noun style. Peretti's noun style is effective in suppressing action as the verbs sink into nouns and the sentence's forward motion sinks into a *da da dum, da da dum* prepositional-phrase string monotony. The noun style opposes action and movement and through it, Peretti creates a defenseless and hopeless atmosphere where his subjects are brought to a life-or-death situation and left with only their innermost thoughts and feelings. Such an atmosphere is the absolute perfect situation for fear to run its course. Below is a diagram depicting the string of prepositional phrases in the first paragraph of Chapter 6:

It was a dark, rainy night, and the raindrops pelting against the old single-pane windows against the old single-pane windows made sleep difficult
for Hank and Mary.

She dropped off eventually, but Hank, already troubled
in spirit, found it much harder

to relax. It had been a lousy day anyway; he had worked
on painting that slogan
off the front
of the house and tried
to figure out who
in the world would write such a thing against him. His ears were still ringing
with the conversation he'd had
with Alf Brummel, and his mind was still playing over and over the bitter comments
from the board meeting. Now he could add
to his apprehensions the congregational meeting
on Friday, and he prayed
to the Lord
in desperate, hushed whispers
as he lay there
in the dark.

Removing these prepositional phrases results in a completely altered style: the subject is surrounded by action and the mood of the prose changes from fearful to informational:

It was a dark, rainy night, and the raindrops pelting against the old single-pane windows made sleep difficult. She dropped off eventually, but Hank, already troubled, found it much harder. It had been a lousy day anyway; he had worked painting that slogan and tried figuring out who would write such a thing against him. His ears were still ringing, and his mind was still playing over and over the bitter comments. Now he could add the congregational meeting's apprehensions, and he prayed.

Peretti's noun style is effective because he highlights where his characters Marshall and Hank are in their respective houses, exactly what they are thinking, and reflects how fear can thwart even the most religiously devoted and bravest of minds. After all, Hank is an intelligent preacher who is still not immune to demonic influences. Peretti's noun style runs parallel with his aggressive voiced style.

A sixth and final persuasive move Peretti makes is his voiced style. Peretti alternates between short, quipped phrases to long lengths of explosive detail, both of which sharpen the voice of his prose. The following paragraphs from Chapter 6 are marked with forward slashes to dictate this voiced style:

Paragraph 1

Hank's eyes opened like a sprung trap./ He thought he could still see the face, just fading away, but instantly he felt like he'd been struck by a very heavy blow to his

chest; his heart began to race and pound like it would burst through his ribs.// He could feel his pajamas and the bedsheets sticking to him, drenched in sweat./ He lay there panting for breath, waiting for his heart to calm down, for the stark terror to go away, but nothing changed and he couldn't make it change.///

Paragraph 2

What was that?/ A creak in the house?/ Footsteps?/ No, he told himself, just the wind against the windows.// The rain had stopped./

Paragraph 3

Another noise, this time a rustling in the living room./ He had never heard that noise at night before./ I gotta wake up, I gotta wake up./ Come on, heart, quiet down so I can hear./

Paragraphs 2 and 3 are the same cadence as a heartbeat throbbing with adrenaline: *da da da dum, da da da dum, da da da dum*. Each sentence is short, the longest being only seven words, each word is short, and there is no time to think, feel, or speak. Hank speaks to his heart asking it to quiet down, but neither his heart nor the narration listens very well. The heartbeat is the physical manifestation of the fear Peretti masters so well in his prose. His words are not only the corporal but the metaphysical representation of a heart in distress. Paragraph 4 is a much longer cadence but the emerging pattern is just as significant:

Paragraph 4

He looked out his bedroom door, up and down the hallway.// No lights were on anywhere, no flashlight beams played about.// But his guts were doing a square dance under his ribs, and there had to be some reason for it.// He reached for the hallway light and flipped the switch.// Nuts!/ The bulb was burnt out./ Since when he didn't know, but he stood in the dark and felt his courage deflated just that much more.// He gripped the bat more tightly and moved down the hall, staying close to the wall, looking ahead, looking behind, listening./// He thought he could hear a quiet rustling somewhere, something moving.//

Here, the heartbeat is long and intense: *dnum dnum dnum dnum, da da, dnum dnum dnum dnum*. With the sentences lengthened, the anticipation intensifies; Marshall is the central character in this paragraph, and his terror becomes a deeper-rooted participant in the prose. The resounding long heartbeat is constant until Marshall's wife screams his name, and suddenly readers are back in Hank's mind. The constant back and forth between characters' perspectives as seen in the different voiced styles is both frustrating and exhilarating, forcing the audience to constantly ask themselves, "Wait, what happened? What happened?!" All four paragraphs denote

different voices Peretti uses to speak his terribly powerful message.

Fear is a typical emotion perpetrated by horror novels, however, Frank E. Peretti is the ultimate storyteller in "*This Present Darkness*." Peretti not only demonstrates fear but relishes it, and, with a few rhetorical strokes of good writing, sends his audience down a spiral of the darkest spiritual torment they can possibly experience. Through diction, metaphors and similes, repetition of personal pronouns and alliteration, sentence structure, noun style, and voiced style, Peretti reaches a level of fear that no one can escape, not even his audience. These terrifying and stylistic features incite fear within the audience, and a word of caution is needed: read Peretti's novel with a companion or, in the very least, do not read the novel at night.

Destinee Sims

Jane Eyre: Gender, Class, and Religion

Introduction

Since Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* was released in 1847, several thousand academic articles have been released by scholars around the globe. A single search for peer-reviewed full access articles on *Jane Eyre* through the CSU Bakersfield Walter Stiern Library's One Search page resulted in more than 5,800 articles; narrowing down the One Search results to exclude articles released before 1990, there are still more than 5,200 full-text articles on *Jane Eyre* available to review. The approximate number of articles available via One Search does not include articles unavailable to CSUB students and staff from outside databases, nor does it consider the numerous full-length books written on *Jane Eyre*. Brontë's creation of a female lead that challenges the social rules of Victorian England was one of the biggest factors leading to mass global publications by feminist literary critics.

Due to the novel's significant role in feminist literary criticism, this bibliographic essay will focus on literature that analyzes *Jane Eyre*'s portrayal of gender, class, and religion. While most feminist critics typically limit their studies to looking at gender and class *or* religion in *Jane Eyre*, scholars must understand how Brontë uses class *and* religion simultaneously to shape gender. The bibliography will begin by looking at the selected research on class, followed by the chosen articles on religion, before finally considering the most significant feminist texts. Each of the articles selected is arguably the most accurate and relevant to a feminist critic's approach to *Jane Eyre*. Scholars are encouraged to use Oxford's 1969 Clarendon edition of *Jane Eyre* when considering the following research.

Research Observations

Classism and Separation

For scholars to even begin to understand the feminist criticism of *Jane Eyre*, they must first understand how Brontë's novel both reflected and challenged the societal rules associated with social class in Victorian England.

Classism is one theme in *Jane Eyre* that is commonly agreed upon by literary scholars. For the intent and purposes of this bibliography, classism is defined as "prejudice or discrimination based on class" (Merriam-Webster). Most scholars consider Jane's position within the working class as unique. Jane is considered by historians to have been "below" the wealthy property owners due to her lack of personal income and inheritance, but "above" the servants since she is not expected to complete anything classified as hard labor and unequal to the common member of the working class due to her education.

Research indicates that class did not only determine what social activities individuals (i.e., women) could participate in; their class also heavily influenced what spaces a woman could occupy in Victorian England. In her article "Travel and Space in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*" (2002), Sharon Locy evaluates how Jane challenges the restrictions placed on women of her social class. Locy explains that it was uncommon for women to spend much time away from home for reasons other than work without a male escort "except for those rare cases of intrepid females who go abroad as adventurers or missionaries or to find husbands in the far-flung outposts of the empire" (106). Scholars like Locy have described how many Victorian women did not even get to leave their "home base" for work, as many families lived in the servants' quarters or private apartments attached to their husband's businesses. Locy observes that while Jane lives on the property with her employers and caretakers at each stage of her life, she had to relocate and travel independently in a seemingly unfeminine way. Locy states, "The appropriately named Gateshead is the starting place in her journey, and each stage in her life is marked by a move to a new location much in the same way as a boy's story of development is" (107). Elaborating, Locy writes, "In the nursery we first see one of the motifs that will be repeated at almost every other stage of Jane's journey: the protagonist's yearning for release, for 'space' to develop in, at a window (open or closed), looking out into a world much wider than the one in which she finds herself imprisoned" (109). Jane's seemingly small liberty throughout the novel is an especially important consideration for feminist literary critics. Jane did more than cross the physical boundaries that separated each location of her journey; she challenged the classist and sexist rules of Victorian England by taking her happiness into her own hands every time she stepped out of the door of her residence unescorted.

Jane's feminist dismissal of classist expectations is also seen through her role as a governess at each new location after she leaves Lowood; the most obvious of Jane's rejections of classism occurs at Thornfield. Esther Godfrey discusses Jane's evolution from a socially conforming new governess to a sure-footed righteous woman in "*Jane*

Eyre, from Governess to Girl Bride" (2005). Godfrey notes initially that "Jane, urged by Mrs. Fairfax, dons the solitary pearl she owns as a brooch and does her best to perform middle-class femininity so that she will be accepted as governess" when she is first meant to meet Mr. Rochester (858). Godfrey describes how Jane finds herself initially being treated as Rochester's property; as the relationship develops between Jane and Rochester against all stigmas, Jane more frequently verbally asserts her independence. Notably, "the sexual threat of Jane's youth influences the transference of physical and economic strength from Rochester to Jane" (Godfrey 865). This means that despite Jane and Rochester belonging to entirely different social classes and age groups, Jane manages to use her position as a young governess to control the dynamics of her relationship with Rochester. Godfrey reminds scholars, "After Jane has returned to the blinded Rochester, but before her romantic interests in him are clear, Rochester must address his own fears of her power" (866). By Rochester being forced to admit that Jane holds significant power, especially over him, Brontë's heroine shakes the foundation of a male-dominated society. This perception of Jane's shift from a submissive middle-class governess to a powerful independent woman ultimately is a critical consideration in feminist criticism.

Once scholars consider the research on Jane's frequent rejection of the social rules typically associated with Victorian classism, they can begin to understand the research on how language is used to separate Jane from the other characters. John G. Peters analyzes the terminology Brontë's characters use to differentiate themselves from each other in "Inside and Outside: Jane Eyre and Marginalization Through Labeling" (1996). Peters begins by explaining that "the novel's characters systematically marginalize Jane and her ideas, as do many of Brontë's contemporaries" because "[...] Jane appears as a threat to the other characters" (57). To come to this conclusion, Peters describes instances that Jane was made the outcast and the terminology used on each occasion to do so. Peters notes that Mrs. Reed refers to Jane with terms like "fiend," "beggar," and "thing" because "Jane's fiery temper and strength also threaten Mrs. Reed. These characteristics challenge Mrs. Reed's authority as head of the family and as a member of the ruling class" (60-61).

Just as critics must consider how Jane is physically and emotionally separated by Mrs. Reed for her stubbornness and temper, feminist critics must review the scholarship on the derogatory language used to separate Bertha Mason from other high-class females. Peters recalls Rochester's descriptions of Bertha, describing her "wolfish cries," "demon-hate," and calling her the "[...] maniac upstairs" (62). By painting Bertha as an animal, she would have been considered to have been lower in

social standing than even the servants. While the feminist interpretation of Bertha's character will be discussed later, it is significant for scholars to understand how the language used to describe Bertha impacted her standing as a member of the higher class.

It is important to note that Peters observes dehumanizing language used in *Jane Eyre* was seemingly positive; Jane's social isolation becomes less obvious through characters like Rochester's use of non-human terms of endearment. Rochester's use of non-human terminology like "genii" and "angel" to describe Jane "nearly a hundred times in the novel, and given the sheer frequency alone, they are more than merely incidental" (Peters 59). Critics like Maria Lamonaca, who will be discussed during the review of critical studies on *Jane Eyre* and religion, question if Rochester uses the magical terms because of his belief that Jane can save and redeem his soul. This theory is echoed by Peters, who asserts that "Jane fully understands the implications of this position and consistently rejects Rochester's attempts to turn her into what she is not" (63). As Peters considers how Rochester sets Jane apart from the rest of society due to her "angelic" morality, he opens the door for feminist critics to begin analyzing how Jane's religious beliefs challenge those of the average working-class Christian female in Victorian England.

Jane Eyre and Religion

Before scholars can begin to consider *Jane Eyre* from a feminist perspective, they must start by understanding how religion would have impacted Jane's life as a woman in Victorian England. There is no doubt among scholars that most English citizens during Brontë's lifetime practiced Christian-based faiths, with many practicing Anglican, Calvinist, and Methodist teachings, although everyone's dedication to their personal faith varied. When sifting through the evaluations of *Jane Eyre* from a religious perspective, the scholarship is seemingly in agreement that the church's expectations of women informed the behaviors of Brontë's characters.

Addressing the significance of Christianity in *Jane Eyre*, J. Jeffery Franklin offers scholars an in-depth look at the influence different religions had on the novel. In his article, "The Merging of Spiritualities: Jane Eyre as Missionary of Love" (1995), Franklin argues that scholars have ignored the references to non-Christian faiths and that they rarely address that Brontë seems to utilize teachings from multiple sectors of Christianity. Elaborating, Franklin explains that "there has been a tendency to flatten all spiritual discourse in the novel into a single one, the discourse of Christianity" (457). As every religion has its own expectations of women, critics need to understand

the spiritual beliefs present in *Jane Eyre* to thoroughly understand what makes Jane's behavior so notable among feminists.

Briefly stepping away from Christianity, Franklin addresses Jane's encounters with ghosts, the spiritual guidance she receives from her "mother" moon, "voodoo fire imagery," and Jane's implied "ESP" (461, 471, 473). Franklin's assessment indicates that it is unclear which alternative spiritualities were behind each spiritual encounter and message; Brontë implies that her story only includes Christian beliefs, but scholars believe that may be because of the stigma associated with non-Christian religions (457-458).

Though Brontë seemingly draws on alternative spiritualities, Christianity is undoubtedly the most prominent religion in *Jane Eyre*. One agreement among literary scholars is that Jane fundamentally disagrees with Brocklehurst's religious teachings, especially his negative attitude toward women's display of individuality. Franklin believes his teachings were Calvinist in nature, explaining that "evidence of Brocklehurst's Calvinism is his reliance on the doctrines of innate human corruption (or original sin) and of strict body/soul duality, particularly, it seems, in the case of young women" (463). Instead, Jane finds herself looking up to Helen Burns and her Evangelical beliefs, such as self-sacrifice and "personal contact between human subject and God" (Franklin 464). Helen is the first female depicted as placing her faith in God without requiring a man's interpretation of God's will, introducing Jane to what Emily Griesinger calls "biblical feminism."

Though Griesinger does not explicitly define biblical feminism, scholars can infer from her article that it includes faith and feminism coming together to empower Christian women like Jane (47). Griesinger explains how Jane's beliefs mirror those of Brontë herself in the article "Charlotte Brontë's Religion: Faith, Feminism, and 'Jane Eyre'" (2008). Observing that Brontë was exposed to biblical feminism during the evangelical movement by her father, an Anglican priest, Griesinger establishes similarities between Jane and Brontë's experience (40). This background information on Brontë's religious upbringing can help scholars begin to understand the inspiration behind Jane's feminist views.

Jane's choice of a romantic partner is a common topic for discussion among feminist literary critics, and Griesinger's analysis of Jane's practice of biblical feminism provides answers from a unique perspective. Griesinger asserts that Jane navigates life by always following her two most important rules: "The first is God's law; the second is her own integrity and self-respect" (49). It is Jane's self-respect and faith in God that allows her to reject becoming Rochester's "savior" through an

immoral marriage, and it prevents her from marrying St. John Rivers and letting him “control her access to God or to speak to her for God” (Griesinger 51). Beyond all else, Griesinger’s research repeatedly shows that Jane puts her relationship with God above all else; Jane needs to be sure that she has interpreted God’s will for herself. Griesinger concludes that it “is the moral law of God after all that constrains Jane from becoming Rochester’s mistress, and it is Rochester’s violation of that law that causes him to lose Jane;” therefore Jane cannot be with him until he has to “lose his hand and eye” to pain for his sins (53). By understanding how Jane navigates each challenge to her faith, scholars can begin to understand Jane’s need to control her personal relationship with God without the interference of a man.

Maria Lamonaca expands Griesinger’s research by emphasizing Jane’s biblical feminism and her fight to protect her relationship with God, ultimately concluding that Jane does not want a man to determine God’s will for her as she fights to protect her soul. Lamonaca argues in “Jane’s Crown of Thorns: Feminism and Christianity in *Jane Eyre*” (2002) that “recent studies suggest that Jane Eyre’s Christian commitments are not necessarily incompatible with the book’s presumably feminist emphases” as older research believes (246). With Griesinger’s background information on Brontë’s religious upbringing, it becomes critical for scholars to consider that

Evangelicals championed the liberty of discernment and conscience for *all* believers, but *also* prized a model of marriage in which wives were spiritually subordinate to their husbands. [...] In resisting Rochester, and, especially, the pious clergyman St. John, Jane confronts a cherished Evangelical model of female piety- one based directly on Milton’s portrayal of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*- that often represented women as *incapable* of discerning God’s will for themselves (Lamonaca 247-248).

Lamonaca ultimately demonstrates that feminism and Christianity are not mutually exclusive through her observations on the evolving research on *Jane Eyre*; instead, feminist concerns within the novel can finally be addressed. Lamonaca observes that “Rather than regard her husband as the mouthpiece of God, the novel suggests, a woman might come to mistake her husband *for* God” (248). This is reflected in Jane’s decision to only go with St. John to Calcutta if she can remain single and her unwillingness to marry Rochester while he believes God sent her to save him (Lamonaca 250, 255).

Alison Searle returns to concerns of false idolization in 2006, four years after Lamonaca’s article, evaluating Jane’s struggles with her love for God and her love for humanity. Searle explains that “Idolatry thus involves putting a created person or object in the place that rightfully belongs to God as the Creator and Redeemer, [...]”

loving someone or something more than God,” and “Undoubtedly, idolatry also involves false worship and patterns of behavior” (39, 40). Examples of idolatry in *Jane Eyre* examples include Rochester’s dependence on Jane for salvation and Jane’s placement of her happiness in Rochester (Searle 42). As Jane realizes she had begun to idolize Rochester, scholars can begin to consider that the discovery of Bertha Mason was likely not the only thing that drove Jane away. Searle considers that “both Jane’s period of wandering in the wilderness and Rochester’s trial by fire in which he tellingly loses both right eye and hand (Matt. 5:27-30), are rich in biblical imagery and the common New Testament theme of sanctification through suffering” (43). Searle’s interpretation of *Jane Eyre* as a text of religious lessons and punishment illustrates Brontë’s novel in a new light for feminist critics.

Feminism and Genre

Once the significant scholarship on class and religion in *Jane Eyre* has been reviewed, scholars can begin to penetrate the vast feminist literature effectively. Feminist literary critics have addressed the role of shame in the novel, Jane’s use of narration, and more, ultimately creating a strong foundation for today’s feminist literary critics to utilize in their own research.

Beginning with the role of shame in *Jane Eyre*, feminist scholar Ashly Bennett demonstrates that shame is used as a weapon to try and force females into submission. Bennett notices the use of shame as early as page 9 of the novel as “an introduction of ‘Miss Eyre’ to the reader” in her 2010 article “Shameful Signification: Narrative and Feeling *Jane Eyre*” (300). Jane is then shamed again by Brocklehurst in front of her class at Lowood, just as Helen experiences, ultimately bringing the two girls together (Brontë 76). Searle concludes that shame prompts characters like Jane and Helen to become “linked through emotional identification, physical mirroring, and identically shared feelings” (307).

Building upon the theory that shame creates a connection between characters, Jane and Adèle develop a bond unlike that of any of Thornfield’s residents. Alexandra Valint argues in “Accepting Adèle in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*” (2016) that Adèle essentially becomes Jane’s double, initially bonding over Rochester and Mrs. Fairfax’s treatment of Adèle and her struggle to adapt to her educational expectations. Not only is Adèle portrayed as a “society girl, a clotheshorse,” with an implied distaste for her Parisian upbringing, but she is shamed for initially struggling to follow orders in the classroom (Valint 203). According to Valint, Jane understood how difficult it is for Adèle to adjust to new life in England since she was also an orphan plucked from a

faraway home and offered her a chance at obtaining a formal education (205).

Valint asserts that Jane and Adèle continue to mirror one another through the similarities of the two characters revealed over the course of their friendship. Just as Rochester views Jane as a symbol of his redemption rather than a flawed human, Valint's article that Rochester may see Adèle as a symbol of his past rather than as an independent person. Valint believes that Rochester's self-loathing may be the reason he also insists on trying to make Adèle into a mini-Céline (217). Scholars need to remember that Adèle and Jane's friendship existed beyond their shared love for Rochester. Jane and Adèle were also companions that spent their free time together, bonding over their love of French and their passion for the arts (Valint 206-207). As a result of their friendship, they "make requests on the other's behalf that shows concern for the other's well-being" and protect one another from Rochester and other outside threats (Valint 211-212). Through Jane and Adèle's relationship built on mutual love and respect, Brontë reminds scholars of the role of the romance of female friendships.

Since Jane tells her own story to readers, scholars have failed to agree upon which genre *Jane Eyre* truly fits best. Jane's story is labeled a romance, a mystery, gothic, and more; however, scholars argue in "Double Gender, Double Genre in Jane Eyre and Villette" (1996) that *Jane Eyre* cannot be limited to only one genre. Warhol explains, "Whereas critics have argued that a tension exists in these novels between realism and Gothic romance, I will argue that the two genres are not so much in competition as in continuous oscillation with each other, serving to double each other at crucial moments" (858). Scholars can begin to question how Brontë creates this "doubleness" once they consider the possibility of two genres. According to Warhol, "when the heroine's experiences are more Gothic than realistic, and the narrator's perspective is bound by the assumption of realism, the gap of dissonant self-narration introduces a doubleness of genre to parallel the heroine-narrator's doubleness of perspective" (864). Similarly, Brontë uses the switch in genres to defy limitations created by social constructs and allow characters like Jane to move between feminine and masculine behaviors. Warhol provides examples of Jane crossing the line of behaviors separating men and women, observing that "she is in the distinctly 'masculine' position of inheriting a living before she becomes Mr. Rochester's wife" although "she has a 'woman's heart'" (869).

While Warhol presents scholars with the necessary information to consider *Jane Eyre* as both a Gothic romance and a realist novel, Sandro Jung argues that it is one of the first mystery novels. Jung elaborates on his claim in "Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, the Female Detective and the 'Crime' of Female Selfhood" (2007), that "[Jane's] mind

-influenced by Mr. Rochester- is encouraged to develop her natural curiosity; this curiosity is then developed into the driving force of Jane's detective work to unravel the mystery of Mr. Rochester's secret at Thornfield" (22). It is Jane's insatiable curiosity that pushes her to keep investigating not only the source of the mysterious laughter in Thornfield, but also to understand why "Mr. Rochester could wish to keep secret what Jane thinks of as Grace's attempt on his life" (Jung 26). As Victorian women were expected to obey their masters without question, whether it be their employer or husband, Jane's willingness to question Rochester (directly and indirectly) is astonishing to feminist literary critics. However, her boldness remains crucial to the plot, as it is Jane's inquisitiveness that allows readers to unravel the mystery of Bertha Mason.

Bertha Mason is primarily known by literary scholars as "the maniac in the attic." However, scholars like Valerie Beattie see Bertha as a challenge to patriarchal authority. Beattie notes in "The Mystery at Thornfield: Representations of Madness in 'Jane Eyre'" (1996) that "madness and confinement generally presented Brontë with a powerful analogy for patriarchy's reception of female rebellion; at once active and passive, dangerous and containable, meaningful and meaningless" (495-496). As the information about Bertha's life before Thornfield is limited, readers are forced to consider her sanity from her actions over the course of the novel; since Bertha had been locked away for years under the unchallenged guise of insanity, it is difficult for scholars to determine if Bertha is truly insane or if she has been falsely made the villain of Rochester's stories. Beattie argues that "the agency that Brontë bestows on Bertha -her calculated attack on Rochester in his bed; her timely rending of the wedding veil, her laugh- runs counter to interpretations of her offered by Rochester and by critics who collude with his viewpoint as simply mad and beyond reach" (499-500). Just as Godfrey observes Rochester's fear of Jane's power, Beattie uses her research to draw attention to Rochester's potential fear of Bertha's. After all, "it is all too often assumed that Bertha is materially powerless because of her consignment to the attic (and for some, to the already problematic madness) whereas in fact, she spends more narrative time out of the attic, verbally and physically, than in it" (Beattie 495). Beattie's article offers scholars an alternative perspective on Bertha and insanity in *Jane Eyre*, opening the door for feminist critics to question unfettered Rochester's control.

Rochester's controlling nature is also explored by Joyce Zonana through Jane's use of feminist orientalism, as Jane alludes to herself as a slave and Rochester as a sultan. In "The Sultan and the Slave: Feminist Orientalism and the Structure of 'Jane

Eyre” (1993), Zonana defines feminist orientalism as “a rhetorical strategy (and a form of thought) by which a speaker or writer neutralizes the threat inherent in feminist demands and makes them palatable to an audience that wishes to affirm its occidental superiority” (594). Zonana theorizes that Jane’s references are mirroring Brontë’s childhood for love for *Arabian Nights*, as Jane compares Rochester’s gifts that were forced upon her as a sultan would “bestow on a slave his gold and gems” (593, 596). As Jane compares Rochester to the cruel King Ahasuerus of Persia, she indirectly compares Bertha Mason to the forsaken Queen Vashti of Persia and herself to Esther, King Ahasuerus’s second wife (Zonana 609). Zonana’s perspective reinforces the belief that Jane did not want Rochester’s lavish gifts, was unhappy with his controlling demeanor, and felt slighted by Rochester on behalf of her and Bertha’s souls. This ultimately exposes why some feminist scholars interpret Jane as never having truly forgiven Rochester before the novel’s conclusion.

Jane’s descriptions of Rochester, which included even his darkest moments, prompt scholars like Lisa Sternlieb to conclude that Jane’s “autobiography” is a revenge novel. In “Jane Eyre: ‘Hazarding Confidences’” (1999), Sternlieb repeatedly emphasizes her belief that Jane *had* to write her story. Sternlieb claims, “She must write, and the act of writing itself belies her claims to ultimate happiness in marriage. For what Jane has written is a revenge novel, one that exposes Rochester’s cruelty to Bertha, to Adele, and especially to herself” (454). While some scholars argue that Jane was only trying to record her experiences, Sternlieb aims to demonstrate that Jane genuinely wants the reader to know everything. However, Sternlieb disagrees with these naive interpretations of Jane’s intent. Sternlieb reminds readers that “Jane is moved by her lover’s words, but when years later, she comes to write down her experience of him in her early days at Thornfield, he is once again represented as capricious and even cruel” (465).

Jane’s seemingly unfiltered portrayal of Rochester puts readers in a unique position, as Sternlieb asserts that the reader is the only person Jane appears to tell her complete truth to. Elaborating, Sternlieb observes that “Jane’s construction of the reader as confidante, a role modeled on her own position as confidante to Rochester” mirrors how “Rochester takes Jane into his confidence in order to lie to her; Jane masquerades as a confidante in order to obtain stories that she will later write about” (455). It is agreed upon by scholars that Jane’s autobiography would have only been read by herself and Brontë’s readers, as Jane wrote her story after Rochester loses his sight and Adele is sent away to school. Sternlieb reminds readers that Jane admits that she kept her thoughts from Rochester since he grew upset whenever Jane began to

describe her experiences, stating that it is "Jane's most explicit confession that Rochester never had and never will read the novel to which the reader is afforded such intimate access" (475, 477).

While the interpretation of *Jane Eyre* as an act of revenge against Rochester appears to be unique to Sternlieb's research, scholars do see Jane's autobiography as her way of challenging those who silenced her. Carla Kaplan was frequently referenced by feminist literary scholars after "'Jane Eyre' and the Romance of Women's Narration" was published in 1996 for her interpretations of Jane's use of narration. Kaplan argues that the novel is intended to be a substitute for Jane's desire to talk after she is shut down by characters like Rochester and Mrs. Reed. Sternlieb's belief that the reader is Jane's only true confidante helps scholars understand how Jane "move[s] from silence to speech, thus providing a model of feminist resistance and liberation" through her narration (Kaplan 6). Kaplan continues, asserting that Jane's decision to begin her novel with "speak I must" indicates that "she expressed the novel's politics of voice and speaks to the importance of self-articulation and self-determination" (8). Through Kaplan's article, scholars are invited to consider what Jane desires out of a conversation, potentially revealing another possible motive for Jane's autobiography. Kaplan states that Jane is searching for someone that wants to listen to her story, just as she wants to find someone who can tell stories well themselves; this is reflected by Jane's choice to adopt the role of storyteller to willing readers (11, 13). This perspective and implied self-awareness place Jane and her autobiography, and Brontë and *Jane Eyre* by proxy, in the middle of the feminist discussion.

Ultimately, each piece of feminist literature included in this bibliography each shares one thing in common: Jane's frequent need to challenge the social rules of a male-dominated Victorian England.

Prediction of Future Research

With the groundwork completed by the scholars included in this bibliography, a wide range of questions left for future scholars to consider. One question raised for future scholars includes Kaplan's interest in the role of homoeroticism in *Jane Eyre*, specifically if unexpressed non-heterosexual love between the female characters may have influenced their relationships. Scholars are also encouraged to consider Jane's relationship with female characters besides Helen, such as the significance of her bond with Mrs. Fairfax and Miss Temple; there is a small amount of research available on the relationship between Jane and Adèle from scholars like Valint, but Adèle's character has essentially been overlooked in the literature. As female characters are

typically highly influential on feminist scholars' interpretations of a text, Jane's bond with each female she meets must be analyzed closely.

Beyond all else, scholars are encouraged to continue studying *Jane Eyre* as a revenge novel; Sternlieb's was the only peer-reviewed scholarship found on Jane's "revenge novel" when preparing this bibliography. Viewing Jane's story through darker lenses, such as revenge and spite, has the potential to change how feminist critics view the "angelic" narrator. In turn, this less-than-optimistic outlook may ultimately create an entirely new focus for feminist scholars.

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Juan Ventimiglia

Perspiring Lector Floats On: Rhetorical Analysis of “This is Water”

In 2005, at the age of 43, David Foster Wallace stood behind a lectern before the soon-to-be graduates of Kenyon College, an elite liberal arts university in Gambier, Ohio, during his commencement speech, and self-deprecatingly admitted that he was going to be perspiring. Wallace, it turns out, was the winning nominee out of ten candidates to be selected to give the address, beating out then-Senator Hillary Clinton and an astronaut-turned-senator John Glenn (Levine). Kenyon College had been employing a democratic approach to selecting who would be awarded the prestigious honor of addressing the graduating class: “The school’s junior class committee, a group of 10 to 12 students, picked the commencement speaker—a process that started more than a year before graduation. A few years earlier, the committee had established priorities for selecting a good speaker--someone who would deliver a memorable speech, and one that was particular to Kenyon” (Levine). When Wallace found out that Meredith Farmer had been the student who had nominated him, he cussed her out. He asked her to try to guess how old she thought he was. He said he was too young—that his dad was more qualified to give a speech than he was. It took Farmer, who had admired Wallace since high school, a while to realize he was joking (Levine). No one knew at the time that Wallace’s speech, with its emphasis on truth seeking and compassion, would be studied as an exemplary lesson on rhetoric.

David Foster Wallace is most famous for his novel *Infinite Jest* (1996), a thousand-page work of experimental fiction that has been on Time Magazine’s list of 100 best English language novels published between 1923 and 2005. Wallace, during the time of the speech, which has by now been published in a book entitled *This is Water*, was a professor of English and Creative Writing at Pomona College. Leading up to the speech, he’d been secretive: he hadn’t told his students or his friends and family that he was going to give a commencement speech. The reason, it turned out, was nerves: he called the address “The big scary ceremony” (Levine). The school’s commencement coordinator comforted him by explaining how intimate the nature of

the event was to be; he also had bribed him by promising him a game of tennis afterward (Levine). When Wallace arrived at Kenyon College, he was still anxiously working on his address, which he needed to trim by five minutes. As Wallace finally stood before the graduating class, perspiring in a black academic gown with a white hood--this attire, the toga, borrowed from ancient Rome--his long brown hair blowing in the wind, a water bottle beside him, no one, least of all himself, knew the impact his speech would have on generations to come.

Before Wallace began his speech, he invited the attendees of the graduation ceremony to perspire along with him, admitting that he was hot beneath his black robe--and also intimating that he was nervous. Not part of the prepared arrangement of the speech, Wallace appealed to the audience's *pathos*, their empathy. Though Wallace was a famous writer, and his capability--his *ethos*--would have been expected. By spontaneously confessing to the audience his own fragility, he was able to level the ground upon which he stood and his audience sat. Wallace was not a superhero: he perspired and felt pressure just like everyone else.

The philosophical doctrine of *kairos* "refers originally to passing through a momentary opening before it closes, as a weaver passes a thread through the loom at just the right moment ... the truth depend[s] on a careful consideration of all factors surrounding an event, including time, opportunity, and circumstances ... *Kairos* [is] also related to decorum or a concern for the words appropriate to the situation..." (41). In kairotically-based rhetoric, the rhetor must be aware of the issue's immediate relevance to time, place, and the community in which it arises (Case 2021). The fleeting, momentary nature of *kairos* is fitting for a commencement speech during a graduation ceremony: Wallace, through *kairos*, was seizing the opportune moment in the graduates' lives--the ceremony a metaphorical portal into adulthood--to warn the graduates of the dangers that lurk on the other side of the stage, on the other side of life. Wallace had been living in that world for a while now, and he, just like they were about to, had passed through. He was going to use his own life experiences, his own observations and reflections, his own 20/20 hindsight, to serve as a warning of what not to let their lives become.

Maintaining traditional commencement speech decorum, Wallace offered greetings and thanks to Kenyon's graduating class, the parents and the attendees, and then promptly, without any transition, began reading an aquatic parable he'd invented to frame his speech around. The parable is short: there are two fish swimming, and when they pass by an older fish that is swimming in the opposite direction, he says, "Morning, boys. How's the water?" The fish don't respond and continue swimming.

Eventually, one fish asks the other, "What the hell is water?" Gorgias of Leontini (483-375 BC), one of the greatest teachers of the art of rhetoric in ancient Greece, believed in the persuasive power of speech, which he called *logos*. Gorgias was fascinated by the "almost magical power persuasive words can exercise over the human mind ... Gorgias's philosophy of language and knowledge suggested that the only reality we can experience 'lies in the human psyche, and its malleability and susceptibility to linguistic manipulation'" (45). Moreover, Gorgias believed the rhetor was a "*psychagogos*, like a poet, a leader of souls through a kind of incantation" (45). Poetry had been believed to have supernatural qualities, to be capable of moving the soul. Effective rhetoric, Gorgias taught, could have a "hypnotic effect on audiences captured by the orator's verbal spell" (46). Wallace's mysterious parable incants the graduates to ponder the meaning of reality, which exists through language, *logos*, like all things of this terrestrial world do. The graduates must be thinking: 'How can fish, who have lived their entire lives in water, not know what water is? Do we ourselves not breathe air from the moment we are born?--Do we even know what air is?--For we cannot see it. How do we know with our minds something we cannot see?' Similarly, most ancient Greeks were skeptical of "phenomena", objects of the physical world. 'Does a tree exist, or does it exist because I perceive it through my human senses? And if I look at the same tree submerged from the bottom of my swimming pool, it becomes distorted. How can I trust my senses to show me absolute truth? I cannot' the Greeks wondered. Protagoras (490-420 BC), one of the pioneers of the early sophists in ancient Greece, believed that "man is the measure of all things; of things that are not, that they are not; of things that are, that they are" (48). Protagoras's relativistic claim gave people the responsibility to make "determinations" about the relative nature of truth. Likewise, the graduates sitting before the perspiring *psychagogos*, who calls into question their own perceptions of reality, can't help but become transfixed, hypnotized, and wonder where this "ceremonial speech" is going to take them.

Platonic in its philosophical relationship to absolute truth, the graduates, one must assume, can't help but shift in their chairs. Wallace has made it clear: through his speech, his rhetoric, he's going to arrive at a new truth, Aristotelian in its attempt to instruct, to enlighten. And he's going to be blunt, brutally honest, even, perhaps, profane--for the word "hell" sets the tone--and what follows calls into question the tradition: the social agreement (*nomos*) and unspoken rules and procedures of a graduation ceremony in general, and the preconceived assumptions of what Wallace's speech is supposed to be about. Wallace proclaims:

This is a standard requirement of US commencement speeches, the deployment of

didactic little parable-ish stories. The story thing turns out to be one of the better, less bullshit conventions of the genre, but if you're worried that I plan to present myself here as the wise, older fish explaining what water is to you younger fish, please don't be. I am not the wise old fish. The point of the fish story is merely that the most obvious, important realities are often the ones that are hardest to see and talk about. Stated as an English sentence, of course, this is just a banal platitude, but the fact is that in the day to day trenches of adult existence, banal platitudes can have a life or death importance, or so I wish to suggest to you on this dry and lovely morning.

Wallace indifferently chops himself down from the heights of the elevated pedestal of fame that Kenyon Hill College, the attendees, and the literary world have raised him to. Wallace wishes to remove from the audience any notions of his own ethos--any anticipated sage on a stage axioms of virtue (*arete*)--and deliver full-disclosure, parental-advisory-truths. Wallace, he himself humbly confesses, is "not the wise old fish." In this way, Wallace is most like Socrates (470-399 BC), Plato's teacher and the subject of Plato's dialogues. For Socrates's famous maxim proclaims, in summary, that he knows nothing. But Socrates also states that "The unexamined life is not worth living" (*Apology of Socrates*, Plato). Wallace, through the means of rhetoric--as unconventional as it might seem--will persuade the graduates to begin to examine every second of their adult lives.

The linear arrangement of Wallace's commencement speech borrows from Aristotle's (384-322 BC) modes of invention: invention, arrangement, style, delivery, memory. Wallace had thought deeply about the contingent issues that surround graduate students and creatively constructed an untraditional approach: he would employ the *enthymeme*. An *enthymeme* is a "rhetorical syllogism ... a deductive argument that moves from a general premise, through a particular application of that premise, to a specific conclusion" (88). Wallace begins with cynicism about the nature and purpose of commencement speeches in general, and confesses that *his* won't be one of *those* full of "banal platitudes." And yet, by the end, Wallace's speech has fulfilled its moral responsibility: he has persuaded the graduates to use the skills a liberal arts education has granted them pragmatically: it's not about all of the knowledge they've acquired, but about having the capacity to choose what they think about. So *choose* wisely, he warns. Because the examples Wallace paints of existential Sysiphian dread, on any given day, could be the graduates' own lives.

Wallace summons the audience's *pathos*--a term that for the Greeks not only meant emotion, but suffering--by summoning their imagination to envision a dystopian future. Wallace casts an ominous shadow over what adulthood could potentially entail

if the graduates are not if the graduates are not conscious of what they choose to think about during the moments of routine, ordinary existence. He ominously portends: "The plain fact is that you graduating seniors do not yet have any clue what 'day in day out' really means." He then methodically sets the shrill morning alarm to awaken the rigmarole of a typical day:

By way of example, let's say it's an average adult day, and you get up in the morning, go to your challenging, white-collar, college-graduate job, and you work hard for eight or ten hours, and at the end of the day you're tired and somewhat stressed and all you want is to go home and have a good supper and maybe unwind for an hour, and then hit the sack early because, of course, you have to get up the next day and do it all again. But then you remember there's no food at home.

Wallace is lifting the veil of ordinary adult existence before the eyes of the graduates who have most likely romanticized the day when they receive their diplomas and cross the stage. The *pathos* of this passage has a heuristic intention: through the dystopian description Wallace presents, the graduates might be fearfully inclined to view their futures in a new light and transform not only into the adults the world expects, but into the conscious humans that Wallace knows they need to become to survive. 'Adulthood is not all glamorous,' he warns. 'In fact, it's pretty monotonous: look! See?' The graduates are watching the etcetera, etcetera, etcetera of a daily grind ad infinitum. The power of Wallace's emotive description harnesses rhetoric's true power, a power the early Sophists were keenly aware of, a power Plato was cautiously weary of. We can safely assume that Wallace will use his power for good, that he will arrive at a spiritual truth, illuminating a path for the graduates to take once they leave their alma mater and step into the adult world.

Wallace, by the end of his address, approaches his central doctrine of climactic truth, of transcendence, of enlightenment that the graduates have been anticipating as eagerly as they have been to toss their caps high into the sky in celebratory "Good riddance!" Wallace, forever the *psychogogos*, delivers his canon of oratory most poignantly here:

But if you really learn how to pay attention, then you will know there are other options. It will actually be within your power to experience a crowded, hot, slow, consumer-hell type situation as not only meaningful, but sacred, on fire with the same force that made the stars: love, fellowship, the mystical oneness of all things deep down.

Wallace's message to the graduates is clear: they have the freedom to choose what they think about. But with characteristic cynicism, Wallace immediately discredits himself by conceding, "Not that that mystical stuff is necessarily true. The only thing that's

that's capital-T True is that you get to decide how you're gonna try to see it." Plato would disagree with Wallace here, for Plato believed in universal truths. But Wallace, I'm sure, believes in those, too, he just knows that these graduates need practical wisdom, wisdom that is dependent on each graduate's contingent issues. Wallace's use of the phrase "Capital-T Truth" is punchy, quotable, the stuff good speeches are remembered for. And Wallace, stamping his lyricism with morale on the concluding lines of his speech, reaches for Longinus's *Sublime* when he writes, "but sacred, on fire with the same force that made the stars: love, fellowship, the mystical oneness of all things deep down." Wallace, here, shows just why he's a writer that's been immortalized on the shelves of literary history.

Wallace pats the audience's back with *pathos* as he concludes his address. "I know that this stuff probably doesn't sound fun and breezy or grandly inspirational the way a commencement speech is supposed to sound. What it is, as far as I can see, is the capital-T Truth, with a whole lot of rhetorical niceties stripped away." Wallace sympathizes with the graduates that sit before him, waiting to board what Cormac McCarthy called *The Sunset Limited*. He knows the train of adulthood will pass over peaks and through valleys he himself has had to summit and endure, but with well-adjusted eyes, with stoic, conscious thought patterns, they can survive, all-knowing of what the fish did not: that this, all along, has been water. This, the graduates have been awakened to learn, is conscious life:

None of this stuff is really about morality or religion or dogma or big fancy questions of life after death. The capital-T Truth is about life BEFORE death. It is about the *real* value of a *real* education (emphasis added), which has almost nothing to do with \ knowledge, and everything to do with simple awareness; awareness of what is so real and essential, so hidden in plain sight all around us, all the time, that we have to keep reminding ourselves over and over: This is water.

In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates defended himself by referencing the fact that everyone has a "daemon" or inner spirit that guides their decisions and morals. It's unique to the individual and compels them in all aspects of their life. Socrates didn't feel compelled to defend himself because he knew his daemon had directed him. Wallace knew that each of the graduates had a daemon inside of themselves, a guiding light. But he also realized that the graduates who sat before him had been in school their entire lives, and the life that awaited them was nothing like the life they'd lived before. But Wallace had lived both. And his own life experience served as a premonition, a foreshadowing of what life might become if they weren't careful, if they let their default setting get in the way of conscious living. Even if Wallace himself hadn't acknowledged that he was the older fish in the aquatic parable, we readers of

his now famous address know that he was. Wallace never believed himself anything more than he was: a writer, a connoisseur of truths, truths so absolute that he himself couldn't come to terms with them. I can't help but think about Wallace's own fate: consciousness for him was too unbearable to swallow, and the water too suddenly became air he could no longer breathe. Rest in peace, David Foster Wallace.

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Cynthia Zavala

No Unity in Silence

On December 28, 1977, writer Audre Lorde delivered her speech “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action” at the Modern Language Association’s “Lesbian and Literature Panel” as a call for women to use their voices for the sake of unity. In essence, Lorde discusses how a brush with death caused her to evaluate her mortality and led her to the conclusion that she had spent too much of her life not speaking up for herself or her beliefs out of fear. She extends the lesson she’s learned about silence to call on her audience, especially women who may have little to nothing in common with one another, to let go of their fears and use their voices to transform their silence into language and action – by which she means for them to use their voices (by speaking, writing, sharing, etc.) to unite and support one another. True to Aristotelian principles of rhetoric, the power of Lorde’s call to women draws from her successful use of tools such as *Arete*, *eunoia*, commonplaces, *Eikos*, *Paradeigma*, and certain stylistic choices which narrow the gap between herself and her audience to make effective persuasion against silence and in favor of unity.

Although it cannot be assumed that Lorde was unacquainted with everyone in attendance at the panel, it can be safely assumed that not everyone knew her character, just as I, not hearing of her or her speech until over forty years later, do not know her character. She willfully constructs her *ethos* by demonstrating her intelligence (through qualification, description, and anecdotes), *arete* (through citing approval from respected authorities and weakening suspicions cast on her character), and *eunoia*.

One of the most important aspects of Lorde’s message is that living life while leaving much unsaid, out of fear of using one’s voice, isn’t worth it because silence will not protect anyone from death. To cite her authority and to warn about the relationship between death and silence, she not only tells an anecdote about coming face to face with death (an experience with a possibly malignant tumor which turned out to be benign), but she also states, “In becoming forcibly and essentially aware of what mortality meant for me...what I most regretted were my silences.” She explains that she had thought her silence would protect her from her fears but that she realized after her experience that “Death...is the final silence” and that she “was going to die,

if not sooner than later, whether or not she had ever spoken.”]. Being pushed to what she thought was the brink of death, gave her an insight that most people may never gain until the end of their lives, and in a demonstration of good will to her audience (Eunoia), it seems that she bares her own experience to them in the hope that they will heed her warning long before they face their own deaths.

Another important aspect of Lorde’s message is that she wants women of various demographics to heed her call. She cites her qualifications to ask this of women by first identifying herself as a “black lesbian poet” and later describing part of how she came to her conclusion about silence by stating that she, “had made contact with other women...bridging [their] differences” and that those same women “gave [her] strength and enabled [her] to scrutinize the essentials of [her] life.” The implication is that breaking her silence to seek unified support from women with differing identities not only helped her through a difficult and fearful time in her life but also gave her the experience necessary to let other women know that they should also do the same throughout the duration of their lives.

To further solidify the inclusive nature of her message, she cites approval from respected authorities by stating “The women who sustained me through that period were Black and white, old and young, lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual, and we all shared a war against the tyrannies of silence. They all gave me a strength and concern without which I could not have survived intact.” This statement which uses Paradeigma, a set of examples or patterns, to list various demographics of women, also furthers her ethos to deliver her lesson about death and silence to the audience by demonstrating that the problem of silence is a burden that she has found women of all backgrounds are forced to carry.

However, Lorde also appears to recognize that her identity as a confident, Black, homosexual woman is one that can be met with prejudice, thereby casting suspicion on her message because of her character. Thus, she asks her audience to reflect upon their lives, silences, and especially upon their fears, by asking, “What are the words you do not yet have? What is it that you need to say? What are the tyrannies that you swallow day after day in an attempt to make your own...still in silence?” and then going on to say, “Perhaps for some of you here now, I am the face of one of your fears. Because I am woman, because I am Black, because I am lesbian, because I am myself – a Black woman warrior poet doing my work – come to ask you, are you doing yours?” In doing this, Lorde places the fear some may have of her identity at the forefront of the audience, where it cannot be ignored and thus, eliminates the power of that fear by veering possible focus away from it and back to a self-reflection to further the power of

the Arete she established with her citation of respected authorities.

In the spirit of Eunoia, a sense of goodwill or receptivity that is established between the speaker and the audience, Lorde employs the use of the grammatical person ("I," "me," "we," "us") for the majority of her speech, while using qualifiers ("most," "many," "some") each time she says "you" while also maintaining a present grammatical tense. Lorde's use of these tools allows her to be one with her audience, thereby shortening the rhetorical distance between the two. This lessens the idea that she is preaching a lesson to be learned by the audience and increases her influence by implying that she is only sharing her knowledge and is still learning too.

Overall, it can be assumed that Lorde's main argument is that most women, regardless of their various backgrounds, live their lives in fear of the repercussions of voicing their thoughts, beliefs, opinions, etc. and so, incorrectly believe that staying silent will protect them from suffering. However, Lorde also argues that speaking out does not automatically beget suffering just as silence does not guarantee comfort. Therefore, her stance is that it would benefit women of all backgrounds to overcome their fears and use their voices to unite and support one another so that they can leave this life with ease and without leaving anything unsaid. While this argument can be fairly easily gleaned from listening to or reading her speech, what makes this implicit argument especially strong is the logos of her argument found, in her use of tools such as commonplaces, Eikos, enthymemes, and Paradeigmas.

The commonplace that Lorde draws upon regarding the relationship between death and silence is the belief that every audience member will eventually die. However, rather than frightening the audience by explicitly reminding them of their own mortality, she uses this commonplace to invoke an even greater fear of silence when she says, "I was going to die, if not sooner then later, whether or not I had ever spoken. My silences had not protected me. Your silence will not protect you."

The second commonplace that Lorde uses is the understanding that there will inevitably be some in her audience who harbor misogynist, racist, and/or homophobic beliefs when she says the following enthymeme, "Perhaps for some of you here now, I am the face of one of your fears. Because I am woman, because I am Black, because I am lesbian..." The implied premise of this enthymeme, which belongs between the two sentences in this excerpt is something akin to, "because you may be misogynist, racist, and/or homophobic." This premise can be deduced from her use of Paradeigma when she lists the three details of her identity. Part of the strength of her pointing out these details as possible fears of some members in the audience is that these three identities have historically given rise to fear in the people who claim them. By

reversing the tide of fear, she tacitly demonstrates overcoming her own fears of speaking out against those who hold prejudices against her.

Similar to the second commonplace regarding prejudices is the third commonplace that Lorde uses in her enthymeme, "For to survive in the mouth of this dragon we call America, [Black people] have had to learn this first and most vital lesson – that we were never meant to survive. Not as human beings. And I tell you, for most of you here right now, neither were you, Black or not...make no mistake the machine will try to grind you into dust anyway, visible or not, silence or no, and we are going to be afraid anyway, whether or not we speak." The commonplace here, as well as the implied premise, is that prejudices of all types (racist, misogynist, homophobic, etc.) reduce people to being seen as lesser beings and have historically, caused the deaths of those who receive the prejudice. The power in this is that it recalibrates the fear of prejudice and death into a fear of silence because if fear is inevitable, it is far better to fear something like prejudice and death than it is to fear using one's own voice.

Furthering the impact of the recalibration of the fear of prejudice and death, is Lorde's use of Eikos when she precedes the enthymeme in the previous paragraph with, "In the cause of silence, each of us draws the face of her own fear – fear of contempt, of censure, of some judgement, of recognition, of challenge, of annihilation...we fear the visibility without which we also cannot truly live." By first voicing the usual fears that cause silence with Paradeigma, Lorde is able to use the contrast of these fears to the fear of prejudice and death to show her audience that contempt, censure, judgement, recognition, challenge, annihilation, and visibility are nothing to be feared when compared to the fear of prejudice and death, thus invoking a willingness in the audience to fear silence instead.

Similarly, by following the "For to survive in the mouth of the dragon we call America" excerpt with the enthymeme, "We can sit in our corners mute forever while our sisters and ourselves are wasted, while our children are distorted and destroyed, while our earth is being poisoned; we can sit in our safe corners or our offices or our homes or whatever, mute as bottles, and we will still be no less afraid" Lorde is able to make real, the fear of silence. Because the implied premise is that one cannot defend against anything without using one's voice in some way (be it by writing, sharing, speaking, etc.), the consequences of silence listed in the enthymeme's Paradeigma become tangible dangers which advance the fear of silence in the audience.

To further encourage confidence in using one's voice, Lorde goes on to later say, "...I remind myself all the time now that if I were to have been born mute or had

maintained an oath of silence my whole life long for safety, I would still have suffered, and I would still die. It is very good for maintaining a perspective on fear.” In this enthymeme, Lorde uses the Eikos that everyone is likely to encounter suffering in their lives while using the Paradeigma of unwilling silences to highlight and reinforce the implied premise that using one’s voice to speak out for one’s beliefs or otherwise does not automatically cause suffering and thus, is not an act to be feared.

Finally, to explicitly call on women to use their voices to unite, she tells her audience that “Where the words of women are crying to be heard, we each of us must recognize our responsibility to seek those words out, to read them and share them and examine them in their pertinence to our living.” In the next few sentences, she uses Eikos and Paradeigma to counter the possibility of excuses the audience might make against using their voices to unite with one another despite differences in their background, Lorde says, “That we not hide behind the mockeries of separations that have been imposed upon us and which so often we accept as our own. For instance, ‘I cannot possibly teach Black women’s writing – their experience is so different from mine.’ Yet how many years have you spent teaching Plato and Shakespeare and Proust? Or another, ‘She’s a white woman and what could she possibly have to say to me?’ Or, ‘She’s a lesbian, what would my husband think, or my chairman say if he sees my booklets?’ Or again, ‘This woman writes of her sons and I have no children.’ And all the other endless ways in which we rob ourselves of ourselves and each other.” The effect this has is to render excuses such as these futile, thus implanting within the audience a conscience about ways they might absolve themselves of what Lorde is asking them to do.

If Lorde can convince her audience to be more fearful of silence than they are of death, prejudice, or the repercussions of speaking out, a major part of her persuasion has been accomplished. Lorde’s innate usage of Aristotelian logos tactics is what enable her to achieve this half of her persuasion. However, without first establishing an audience that is willing to accept her authority on the issues she presents, her argument about silence would be fruitless. This is why I also believe that the Aristotelian tools she naturally uses in the speech to establish an ethos for herself is enough to make me feel a sense of authority and sparks within me a willingness to listen to her. Overall, the conclusion that I’ve assessed is that Audre Lorde was able to use Aristotle’s rhetorical tools to effectively communicate her message to her audience.

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A.C. Rigby

**Voices through Adversity: A Review of Chimamanda Adichie's
Purple Hibiscus. Algonquin Books. 291 pages.**

Winner of the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* tells the fictional story of young Kambili, a 15-year-old Nigerian girl on the cusp of womanhood while her country is on the verge of civil war. Kambili's world is full of the complexities and contradictions characteristic of post-colonialist societies. The people who shape Kambili's understanding of her world are equally complex; from her father Eugene who is both abuser and savior, to her Aunt Ifeoma, who embodies feminist ideals while simultaneously embracing tradition, to Father Amadi, a Catholic priest who is responsible for Kambili's sexual awakening, *Purple Hibiscus* compliments Adichie's concept of the "danger of a single story" and serves as a cautionary tale which unfolds through complex characters and rich natural imagery.

Like many young people, Kambili's impression of the world is heavily influenced by her family. Yet Kambili's world is unlike most, in that her family structure is closer to that of a totalitarian regime rather than a loving household. Referred to as a "colonial product" by his sister Ifeoma, Kambili's father Eugene is devoutly Catholic and runs his household with an iron fist. As such, Eugene is willing to use any means necessary to keep his family on what he feels is the path toward righteousness. In this way, Kambili and her brother Jaja are subjected to an extreme version of concerted cultivation, the intensive parenting style typical of middle and upper-class families, that would shock even the most ardent tiger parent. However, Eugene is a complicated antagonist with an immaculate track record of philanthropy and activism in the community whose actions, however extreme, are born seemingly out of love for his family. It is not until the children chance to stay with their Aunt Ifeoma, which Eugene has expressly forbidden until an unexpected turn of events, that they gain a fresh perspective.

Eugene's sister, Ifeoma, is responsible for sowing the seeds of change in the lives of Kambili and Jaja—both literally and figuratively. Kambili and Jaja's sense of their place in the world is thus represented by the cultivation of the purple hibiscus

that grows in Ifeoma's garden. Despite being brother and sister, Ifeoma and Eugene are opposites. Where Eugene forbids the children to question authority, Ifeoma encourages it. Where Eugene eschews traditional Igbo religious practices to such an extent that he disowns his "pagan" father, Ifeoma embraces both Catholicism *and* traditional Igbo ways. Ifeoma's role in Kambili's life is pivotal and inspiring. It seems fitting that Adichie would use her own mother as the source of inspiration for Kambili's Ifeoma, since they share a middle name, and of whom *Purple Hibiscus* is dedicated. It is through Ifeoma that Kambili meets Father Amadi. Father Amadi further expands Kambili's understanding of the world, first through his unorthodox representation of Catholic priesthood, and second as a man who begins to develop romantic feelings toward Kambili—and she for him. Their affair is not a physical one, but one of intense emotion, nonetheless. Adichie remains unafraid to address taboo subjects, and this is certainly one of them.

Throughout *Purple Hibiscus* is evidence of the natural world, and one that readers will find themselves captivated by—from the dry season of harmattan before coming to Aunty Ifeoma's house, to the monsoon season that reflects the tumultuous atmosphere upon returning to Kambili's house. Adichie divides the book into two central parts: Before Palm Sunday and After Palm Sunday. This structural decision not only signals the pivotal moment of Kambili's growing awareness, but also gives the reader a sense that this is in fact the springtime of Kambili's life; she is not only coming of age but coming into her own self-acceptance, not as the daughter of an oppressive and exacting father, but as a young woman freed from her psychological shackles. *Purple Hibiscus* is a fictional embodiment of Adichie's "danger of a single story", which some readers may know from her successful TED Talk of the same name, and calls for the dismantling of stereotypes—a recurring theme within Adichie's body of work. Very young readers and those sensitive to depictions of domestic violence are cautioned, and therefore, *Purple Hibiscus* is best suited to mature and young adult audiences. *Purple Hibiscus* is published by Algonquin Books and is available for purchase for \$16.95 U.S. dollars.

Kayla Rogers

The Colorful Contrasts of Isabel Greenberg's *Glass Town*: A Review of Isabel Greenberg's *Glass Town: The Imaginary World of the Brontës*. Abrams Comics, 2020. 222 pages.

Small on the edge of the lonely English countryside, a solitary woman walks along the desolate blue-gray landscape. As she stops to rest, she turns her head and realizes that she isn't alone: "Is it you? After all this time?" A man in a bright orange jacket replies: "I've always been here. You just haven't wanted me." And so begins the adventure of *Glass Town: The Imaginary World of the Brontës*, the third graphic novel by award-winning author and artist Isabel Greenberg, who dives into the imaginary world of Brontë juvenilia. The lonely woman is Charlotte Brontë, and the man she is speaking to isn't really a man at all but the creation of her own imagination. In her introductory note to the readers, Greenberg is careful to explain how she has embellished, inferred, and altered the fragmented pieces of the earliest childhood writing of the four Brontë children, yet she has been equally careful to preserve the key details surrounding the Brontë's childhood and their first creative writing experiences—experiences which would go on to have a profound influence on the Brontë sisters' future literary success.

The story of the Brontës' childhood begins with a funeral. It is here when the readers are introduced to the four surviving Brontë children: Anne, Emily, Charlotte, and Bran. They have just buried their two older sisters and have furthermore suffered the loss of their mother just a few years earlier. From this experience of grief and loss, the four children reimagine a world apart from the desolate English village of Haworth and the life of loss that they have always known. A small set of wooden toy soldiers is all the inspiration the children need to create the imaginary world they call Glass Town. The children scratch their stories on bits of reclaimed paper and delve into a world of vivid color, character, and adventure, a world without borders, where the Brontë children and their creations can pass between the worlds of reality and fantasy. In Glass Town, there is a vast array of vivid characters, such as the orange coat wearing Charles Wellesley and his arrogant and manipulative brother Arthur. Then

there is the brave Quashia Quamina, taken from his homeland as a small child and adopted into a world of racial discrimination. And finally, there is Mary Percy, the daughter of the greedy Northangerland who is torn between the duty to her husband Arthur and her passionate love for Quashia. The story switches back and forth between the world of reality and the world of fantasy, and the lines between these worlds soon begin to blur. Yet, the innocence of Glass Town cannot last forever, and as the four Brontë children grow older, their lives become more complicated. This conflict is mirrored in Glass Town, especially as the competing desires of the four Brontë siblings threaten its stability. Eventually, Anne and Emily leave Charlotte and Bran to create separate worlds. Without Anne and Emily's stabilizing presence, the conflict between Quashia and Arthur continues to escalate, and Glass Town descends into a war.

Isabel Greenberg takes the rich history of the Brontë's childhood juvenilia and weaves it into a unified story underlying complex themes. The most apparent theme is death and the complicated experience of grief. Death follows the Brontë children wherever they go, and none of them would live past the age of forty. Yet, Greenberg explores how the experience of grief can be a source of creation, such as the creation of Glass Town itself, which helps the young Brontë siblings to emotionally heal from the death of their mother and sisters. Conversely, the story also touches upon the danger of becoming so preoccupied with fantasy that it causes a complete disconnection from reality. The novel explores the complicated history of British colonialism and systematic racism manifested in the character of Quashia, who longs for freedom and his homeland. The conflict between Quashia and his adopted brother, Arthur, underscores how colonialism perpetuates racism in this once innocent and peaceful society and provides a poignant allusion to the colonial conquests that were happening in Britain during the Brontës' lifetimes. Perhaps the most profound theme introduced in the novel deals with how an author's literary creations can go on to outlive the author and eventually develop a distinct life of their own. One of the most fascinating aspects in the story happens when the characters of Glass Town become aware of their own strange existence. Eventually, they begin to act outside of Charlotte's control, illustrating how literary creation can develop unintended meaning and how literary characters can obtain an afterlife beyond a writer's control.

As the illustrator and author of *Glass Town*, Greenberg's simple and direct writing style is perfectly counterbalanced with the expressive quality of her illustrations. The contrast between the sketchy black lines and splotches of vivid color gives the work an abstract quality, and the impressionistic style of the illustrations is both captivating and essential to the forward action of the story. The characters are

simply drawn, yet extraordinarily expressive and emotionally relatable. Greenberg's exciting use of color establishes shifting perspectives throughout the novel, alternating between the gray-blues of the English countryside, deep reds, mauves, and pinks of the Brontë childhood home, and the tropical yellows, oranges, and blues of Glass Town. The contrast of colors mirrors the sadness, grief, and triumph of the Brontë children and helps to convey mood, tone, and setting without the need for additional written dialogue or description. Greenberg's imagery was my favorite aspect of the novel: the illustrations of Charlotte falling between worlds of giant ink quills, of books flying like birds through the air, and of the characters of Glass Town arranged on a giant chessboard waiting to be moved. The imagery throughout the novel is something to behold, and Greenberg's masterful use of lines, color, and perspective gives the illustrations an aspect of surrealism that I thought was particularly well done.

British graphic novelist Isabel Greenberg first made waves as the author and illustrator of the award-winning graphic novel *The Encyclopedia of Early Earth*. She continued to captivate readers with her bestselling *The One Hundred Night a Hero*. As her third novel, *Glass Town* is a unique departure from her previous work. In just 217 pages, Greenberg manages to take the scrambled fragments of the Brontë childhood juvenilia and turn them into a cohesive story that blends a rich variety of narratives and themes. As a graphic novel, *Glass Town* defies being categorized in a single genre. Blending aspects of historical fiction, romance, and fantasy, this novel work has something that can appeal to a vast array of audiences, from Brontë literature enthusiasts, to young adult readers, to fans of fantasy. Even the casual reader will be struck by the vivid contrast of color and ink and abstract realism of the story's characters. Published by Abrams Comicarts, *Glass Town* is available for purchase online and in most local and chain bookstores and is an essential and captivating summer read.

Gina Romley

A Timely Triumph: Review of Brit Bennett's *The Vanishing Half*. Riverhead Books, 2020. 343 pages.

On May 25, 2020, Officer Derek Chauvin of the Minneapolis Police Department was caught on camera kneeling on the neck of George Floyd, a black man, for nine minutes and twenty-nine seconds, resulting in Floyd dying as he pleaded for his life in police custody. The world watched in horror as video and images of the killing were widely circulated on social media and news outlets alike. Americans, in particular, were grieved at the nation's dark legacy of black men and women senselessly dying in the custody of police. In response, mass protests calling for immediate police reform took place across the country, and racial issues dominated the national conversation in the United States.

A short eight days after the death of George Floyd, on June 2, 2020, as the nation grappled with its long history of racism, Brit Bennett's sophomore novel *The Vanishing Half* debuted at number one on *The New York Times* fiction best-seller list. The novel addresses the themes of racism and colorism in a plot that spans multiple generations of black people from the 1940s until the 1990s. The story centers around the identical Vignes twins, quiet Stella and outgoing Desiree, who are the light-skinned descendants of the founder of their hometown of Mallard, Louisiana. The town of Mallard was founded with the intention that its black residents would only have children with people lighter than themselves, thus making each generation lighter than the one before. The founder, a former slave, envisioned Mallard as an oasis for his posterity, as inhabitants would be emancipated from the prejudice that dark skin elicits from society while existing ostracized in their own community. By the time the novel begins in the 1940s, Mallard is still a black community, but "the darkest ones [are] no swarthier than a Greek," and the Vignes twins wield "creamy skin, hazel eyes, [and] wavy hair."

Though the community marvels at the twins' light skin, Stella and Desiree learn early on that "lightness, like anything inherited at great cost, was a lonely gift," and could not insulate them from the terror of racism, as their ancestors had envisioned

when creating Mallard. Their first lesson in this reality is their father's lynching, an event that the twins witness while hiding in a closet. Their father, a successful businessman whose achievements threatened white people in nearby New Orleans, though appearing fair-skinned, is still a victim of racially motivated violence, and the twins' life trajectories are shaped significantly by the emotional impact of this event. From here, Bennett's story takes shape: one twin, Desiree, seeing lightness as an inconsequential objective due to the death of her father, defiantly has a child with a dark-skinned man and returns to Mallard with her dark-skinned child; and the other twin, Stella, abandons her family, forges a new identity, and passes as white with her affluent white husband and daughter in California. The story spans generations, as much of the narration is also devoted to the two offspring of Desiree and Stella, Jude and Kennedy respectively, as the cousins' paths collide by chance in California while attending college. The representations of race throughout the novel are both expansive and complex through the four main characters: Desiree is light-skinned, but unashamed of her race; Stella is also light-skinned, but completely denies her race and pretends to be white; Jude is derisively described by the Mallard residents as "blueblack... like she flown direct from Africa"; and Kennedy is fair-skinned, blonde, and unaware of the fact that her mother is black. Despite the complexity of the characters' relationships, Bennett manages to avoid a convoluted plot development, and the reader can easily traverse different time periods and racial identities.

Bennett's most eloquent commentary revealed through the story is the painful effect of colorism within the black community. Bennett sympathetically illustrates through her characters the toll of internalized racism that motivates black people to hate the color of their skin so much that darkness is seen as an unbearable burden on their future children. The result of this internalization of racism is black people discriminating against and oppressing members of their own community because of how dark their skin appears in an act of misplaced anger. In the novel, the character who suffers from colorism the most is Jude, whose blackness shocks the light-skinned residents of Mallard, even though they are black themselves. While growing up in Mallard, Jude is oddly subjected to more cruelty and discrimination when she attends college in California and settles into a group of friends that includes white people. Bennett, through Jude, subtly illustrates that the deleterious effect of colorism may be less obvious than the effect of racially-motivated violence, but it still involves forces that hinder the development of black identity. Though Bennett deftly navigates weighty themes--colorism, racism, and grief--she also expertly injects warmth and humor into her plot to temper the seriousness of those topics. For example, Desiree

overcomes an abusive relationship and finds a supportive partner that encourages her autonomy in a sweet, romantic plot that unfolds. Also, Kennedy's lack of self-awareness about her white privilege is often humorously presented at the character's expense, and that injects levity into the often-heavy narrative themes.

The Vanishing Half is Brit Bennett's anticipated follow up to her 2016 debut novel *The Mothers*, which also reached *The New York Times* fiction best-seller list and received widespread critical acclaim. At only 31 years old, Bennett successfully overcame the sophomore slump with a more ambitious novel that does not shy away from difficult topics, such as colorism and racial passing, while still being an engaging and approachable read for fiction fans. Released in the wake of George Floyd's death, the story of two girls' lives being transformed upon witnessing the lynching of their father has to resonate strongly with audiences. Fresh in the minds of readers are the images of Gianna Floyd, George's 6-year-old daughter, growing up in a climate where the video of her father's death is unavoidable in the age of smart devices. Bennett's lynching story, despite being set in the mid-Twentieth Century, paralleled the current events surrounding its release, thus demonstrating that Bennett's work is not only good, but important to the national dialogue.

The Vanishing Half (and Bennett's first novel, *The Mothers*) can be purchased at all major book retailers. People who are interested in the story, but seldom get around to reading the book, fear not: HBO has acquired the rights to adapt the novel into a limited series, with Bennett serving as executive producer, and *The Mothers* is being adapted into a screenplay by Warner Bros.