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Contributions in all areas of literary criticism are warmly welcomed. Essays must have the recommendation 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.

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Introduction

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

The issue includes twelve essays examining a wide range of literature from William Shakespeare and Mary Shelley to Zadie Smith and Ernesto Quiñonez. The task of designing the issue from beginning to end fell squarely and solely on Brooke Grimes, who took charge of almost everything. She designed the call for papers, managed the submissions, laid the issue on Adobe InDesign, and helped edit the essays.

Brooke availed herself of all digital means at her disposal. She experimented for the first time with Artificial Intelligence. Prompting a text-to-image AI generator, Brooke created an image and took it through multiple iterations. She manipulated a series of commands to generate an image "of the Greek muse Calliope with an open book in the style of the French masters." She adjusted parameters to modify the style and quality of the image—and limit the number of her arms from four to two!—an art in and of itself. After several weeks and many generations of the image, our design was ready. The result is the regal Calliope we feature on the cover as an inspiration to both readers and writers.

The AI-generated cover image thus evokes the fundamental undertakings of the English major, engaged in developing the distinctly human skills of reading and writing in intuitive, intelligent, and culturally sensitive ways.

We thank the contributors and their sponsoring faculty as well as those who played a role in bringing *Calliope* 16 to press: Steven Grimes, Duncan Hanon, Analía Rodríguez, Andrea Weikle, Carol Dell'Amico, Steve Frye, and Robert Frakes.

Mónica G. Ayuso
Faculty Editor

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Taína: A People of Color Bildungsroman Projecting Hope in the Face of Diaspora and Despair

Katie Gonzalez

A novel written by acclaimed author Ernesto Quiñonez in 2019, *Taína* circulates magic realism to capture love, redemption, and the coming-of-age of those representing Spanish Harlem and modern-day Puerto Rico with its indigenous roots. Quiñonez, an Ecuadorian-born American, challenges the conventional notions of the Bildungsroman that white authors have established when creating white protagonists. The classic works *David Copperfield* and *Jane Eyr*e are critically acclaimed Bildungsromane in which the protagonist's name in the title emphasizes their life narration from childhood to maturity, yet *Taína* is not the case. The character Taína is instead Julio's (the protagonist/narrator) object of obsession, and the novel only encapsulates the duration of her pregnancy as a fifteen-year-old while Julio is on the cusp of legal adulthood. Quiñonez brilliantly challenges the notion that the Bildungsroman as a literary convention spans until adulthood; here it consists of formative and spiritual experiences occurring in a short period of time that paradoxically peers back decades upon centuries to one's indigeneity. *Taína* nonetheless succeeds in offering hope and growth for its characters of ethnic backgrounds despite being marginalized by their Caucasian counterpart.

The setting of *Taína* is foundational for understanding how Quiñonez warps the typical convention of the Bildungsroman as demonstrated by white authors. East Harlem, commonly known as Spanish Harlem, finds itself in the precarious situation of being wedged between the Bronx and Manhattan, which influences the plot immensely. PhD candidate Justin Gaffney Samuels notes:

> this book also covers many of the themes Quiñonez dealt with in his earlier books *Bodega Dreams* and *Chango's Fire*. The main difference in Bodega Dreams [is that] gentrification had not touched Harlem. In *Chango's Fire*, gentrification was just starting to come. In *Taína*, it's a part of life in Harlem. The protagonist of all three books is Julio, and he is a young man set for the time in each book. In previous books Julio essentially seemed to become interested in college at a later age, as professional pressures weren't as big in East Harlem in the past. With gentrification already here in *Taína*, Julio has had to step up his game and is preparing to apply to Princeton University. (Samuels 145)

Quiñonez's adaptation of the Bildungsroman is thus politically and socioeconom-

ically motivated. Each of Quiñonez's protagonists is generically and intentionally named Julio to convey that the formative, spiritual journey is specific to both an individual and an entire community: from diaspora to reestablishment to gentrification as a form of neocolonialism that displaces ethnic-minorities from their homes. And given how gentrification has already infiltrated Spanish Harlem in *Taína*, Julio's sense of urgency to be academically strong enough for a higher education at the same time that he provides for Taína's growing family brilliantly conveys how the literary convention of the Bildungsroman quite literally cannot afford to leisurely space the events of this story. The here and now of the ethnic-minority experience are urgent.

Crescencio López-González identifies how Quiñonez operates as an author challenging the popular conceptions of the coming-of-age novel. Describing Quiñonez's desire to illustrate the post-diasporic Latino struggle in modern economic predicaments, López-González also captures how "the representative inner-city imaginary is intrinsically connected to contextualized public space, identity, desires, fears, and possibilities of escape from economically segregated neighborhoods" (61). And for Julio, the only way out is through; in order to assist Taína's newfound economic hardship resulting from her immaculate pregnancy, he must resort to Salvador's "opportunist" advice of stealing dogs to pressure reward money postings from the socialite owners. Salvador as "el Vejigante" is the character contextualizing the gang violence that historically cropped up in Spanish Harlem as a result of "reducing funds across multiple service sectors such as police departments, fire departments, and social welfare programs" (López-González 76) alongside school systems acting as "a controller and reproducer of the labor force for the growth and maintenance of the fortified city" (López-González 65). Julio raises understandable moral objections to Salvador's plan to con people, especially given Salvador's criminal record and served jail time. However, Salvador quickly counters with the exact points López-González says:

> Listen, *papo*, poverty is violence. They keep us poor so we can lose it and then they can blame us. [...] The capitalist system, the wealthy, the politicians, the police, everyone who benefits from you dying paying rent, *papo*. That's the Man. [...] Violence doesn't always come with a gun, *papo*. It can come with policies that are put in order to keep people like us in their place. . . . [W]hen you love someone you burn the sky if you have to in order to feed them. (Quiñonez 114-115)

Here, Quiñonez not only notes that gentrification acts as a second wave of aggression towards people of color but that one is supposed to right wrongs. If an ethnic narrative is to ever follow the European conventions of the Bildungsroman, then one must first do as the colonizers have done to level the playing field of growth.

Quiñonez's language throughout *Taína* is crucial to an understanding of how

he shapes the convention of the Bildungsroman to fit the novel. Prior to publishing *Taína* in 2019, Quiñonez submitted an excerpt of *Taína's Song* to *Chiricú Journal: Latinx Literatures, Arts, and Cultures* in 2017. The excerpt titled "Verse 17: La Espiritista" (where Taína was originally thirteen instead of fifteen) seems to have been inserted in the middle of Verse 1 of *The Fourth Book of Julio: Peta Ponce* in Quiñonez's 2019 novel. The arrival of Peta Ponce is one of the most climactic spiritual moments in the novel, so it is crucial to observe how Quiñonez's language has changed from the 2017 published excerpt to the official 2019 novel. Quiñonez goes from describing Peta Ponce "in all white as if it was her wedding" and how "delicious Puerto Rican plates were spread out and lay untouched for the spirits" (139) to how Peta Ponce simply arrived "dressed in all white" and "Puerto Rican plates were spread out, some had been eaten from, as Doña Flores had granted the espiritista and Taína a feast, while some plates lay untouched for the spirits" (204). Adjustment of the language of this scene seems to scale back the ritualistic white of Peta's garments and the direct reference to the food as intended only for the spirits. One could say that Quiñonez leans "realism" to balance out the "magic" soon to ensue. Quiñonez additionally changes Taína's attire from "a long beautiful blue dress" (139) to "a long beautiful white dress" (204). The significance of the originally blue dress may possibly be in relation to the flag of the Tanío Turabo Aymaco of Borinken tribe. Tribal Spokesperson Jose A. Tureycu Lopez refers to his tribe as:

> the modern-day rebirth of the ancient Tanío Native American Indian Tribe of the regions of Turabo and Aymaco … Our tribe represents those Tanío Native Americans who died, and fled their homelands during the massacre that came with the arrival of Christopher Columbus to the Americas in 1492. Our Tribe also represents those survivors and their descendants of the massacre. Our Tribe is made up of: documented and non-documented, pure blood and non-pure blood descendants of the Tanío Turabo and Aymaco Tribes, pure blood and non-pure blood descendants of other various Tanío Tribes from the entire Caribbean, and non-Tanío friends, families, and supporters of the Tanío People. (Healy)

Not only does the Tanío Turabo Aymaco of Borinken tribe emphasize a solid bond with the diaspora, but Lopez continues on to explain the new flag design in which "blue represents the waters our ancestors crossed to reach the Carribean from South America and also represents the sky (Turey) the realm of Father Sun" (Healy, Orenski). It is plausible then that Quiñonez originally planned for Taína to wear a dress symbolic of indigeneity but decided it would instead be best if she matched Peta Ponce in white to connote purity.

Stephen Slemon in "Magic Realism as Post-Colonial Discourse" investigates how magic realism operates as a literary style and comments on how it is an oxymoron for suggesting a binary opposition between the real and fantastical.

Slemon argues that

> [i]n the language of narration in a magic realist text, a battle between two oppositional systems take[s] place, each working toward the creation of a different kind of fictional world from the other. Since the ground rules of these two worlds are incompatible, neither one can fully come into being, and each remains suspended, locked in a continuous dialectic with the "other," a situation which creates disjunction within each of the separate discursive systems, rending them with gaps, absences, and silence. (11)

Quiñonez's scene depicting the arrival of Peta Ponce and the truth concerning Taína's pregnancy is pungent with this exact battle. Juxtaposing the 2017 excerpt and the 2019 publication seems to suggest Quiñonez was challenged to demonstrate as balanced a representation as possible of both the real and the fantastical when it came to conveying a battle between divine beings over Taína's sleeping body. Although Quiñonez slightly relaxed the language concerning the wardrobe and food offerings, he does strengthen the spiritual ritual by altering how Peta Ponce "ordered Doña Flores to fill a bowl with water and to light a white candle" (141) to ordering Doña Flores to "fill a bowl with water mixed with *agua maravilla* and to light a white candle" (207). *Agua maravilla*, translated literally as magic/marvelous water, is at times defined as witch hazel and connotes more magical properties to assist the oncoming séance. And given how Quiñonez also changes the language of how Peta Ponce would "slide her nails all over the walls as if she needed to leave fingerprints behind" (139) to "Peta Ponce dug her fingernails over the walls, too, as if she needed to leave scratches behind" (204), the audience can infer this séance will be much more intense and compelling.

But while Peta Ponce's séance provides crucial, spiritual information within the novel, Quiñonez circulates another topic in *Taína* that envelops a bigger formative experience: *la operación*. Leylha Ahuile, interviewing Quiñonez for *Publishers Weekly* in 2020, asked "How close is the story of Taína to the biblical story of Mary and Joseph?" to which Quiñonez replied:

> The novel does have religious undertones, but it is more about the sterilization of women in Puerto Rico. It's been done for decades and it's so terrible. It shows how much hate exists towards poor women, as this was a common practice not just in Puerto Rico but also in the barrios in the U.S. It was often financed by companies to ensure their female workers would not miss work; the government also wanted to make sure women with disabilities would not procreate. (Ahuile)

Peta Ponce's séance serves to unlock the next phase of Taína's life, but it is doubly important in Quiñonez's eyes to narrow in on the truth for women like Doña Flores (Julio's mother) and Doña Inelda (Taína's mother). Sterilization subjected Puerto Rican women to immense physical, emotional, and psychological trauma, making

Julio's father's comment of how Puerto Rican women come "from a culture where this is nothing. So many do it. So many were forced to do it that it becomes nothing" (Quiñonez 183) that much more revealing. Quiñonez explores the little-known fact of the forced sterilization of Puerto Rican women on the island and in the continental US in the 1930s. In the face of this exploitation, men like Salvador and Julio see crime as their only option. Quiñonez relays the generational inequity Latinx minorities are subjected to that hinders a healthy, normal lifespan from childhood to adulthood.

Although Quiñonez highlights the ugly truths of Puerto Rican societal treatment, and rightfully so, he also intends to project hope for the community going forward. When asked by Ahuile how he introduces darkness to the readers of *Taína*, Quiñonez responds:

> I deal with it with a bit of comedy and urban magical realism. My goal, in all three of my books, including *Chango's Fire*, is to bring magical realism to the barrios, make it more urban. That's where these stories take place and that is why students connect with them. They've all had classmates that were pregnant, but usually the boy doesn't take responsibility, whereas in this book Julio falls in love with Taína and does anything, even commits crimes, in order to provide for her and the baby. (Ahuile)

In other words, magic realism is utilized to fight against the gentrification displacing Spanish Harlem residents. Quiñonez as someone who was raised in El Barrio is very much aware of these social issues, and thus pursues his truth of a realistically redeeming outcome. Julio acknowledges to the socialite dog owners, "I had brutally violated them without their consent. I had misinformed them. I had coerced them. Had fooled them. I had not given them the proper information. I had left these wealthy women emotionally scarred for life" (239). This is Quiñonez's irony jabbing one last time at how Puerto Rican women faced legitimate, life-altering trauma in comparison to white women scammed out of lost dog reward money. Nonetheless, Julio is found guilty as "a man, not a kid, a man—on trial" (240). It is thanks to Julio's practical routine of contributing money to his mother's boot that they can afford his bail be by Taína's side during the delivery. Usmaíl is brought into the world by extraordinary means to match her extraordinary conception, soon to be a "sought-after sight in Spanish Harlem" (Quiñonez 255) as a beacon of hope, but only after the loose ends of Julio's misconducts are resolved in an unfortunately realistic fashion.

Quiñonez's diction is powerful in the novel's closing, gifting the ultimate redemption for all characters and community at large. Peta Ponce's séance, the story of Doña Flores's and Inelda's sterilization, and Julio's arrest all contribute to furthering one's knowledge about the community's inner workings, but they pale in comparison to the final, most formative experience of Taína's song (also Quiñonez's original book title) that provides the much-deserved relief from the truths and traumas in this

Bildungsroman. The language of how Taína's voice "sang that the unstoppable river that flows among us is not time but love" (258) and how "when Taína sang, no one had credit card debt, no one had rents to pay, no one had ills or imperfections. . . . Everyone built a ladder to the stars. Everyone did for others what they wanted done for themselves. Everyone was in love. Everyone saw who loved them. Everyone had been forgiven" (262) has inarguable emotional appeal that testifies to a community's resilience. It becomes abundantly clear that Quiñonez gifts redemption, hope, and wisdom in his own, idiosyncratic way to an ethnic community that has been drenched in colonization, gentrification, and trauma, a community that needs no permission to flourish in its own "unconventional" right.

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Speculative Hagiography: The Indigenization of Judeo-Christianity in *Future Home of the Living God*

Mary Kileen Peña

Medieval Christianity has more in common with the spirituality of North American Indigenous[1] nations than you might think—at least that is what the narrator of Louise Erdrich's *Future Home of the Living God* (2017) proposes in her diary entries about her own relationship to Catholicism. Cedar Hawk Songmaker, Erdrich's protagonist, is the reader's guide through a fictional world set in the near future in Minneapolis, MN. She is an Ojibwe woman who was adopted by white parents and is an active member of a local Catholic church—she even writes a monthly magazine called *Zeal* for the parish. Like any good Catholic, Cedar frequently calls upon two saints when she is in need of guidance, protection, or support. Before the novel begins, we are introduced to these saints: a portrait of Kateri Tekakwitha, the first Native American saint, on the title page, and a quote by St. Hildegard of Bingen, patron saint of writers, on its own page immediately before Part I. The choice of a Catholic Ojibwe narrator for a novel of speculative fiction set in a world much like the one its readers live in, with the same history of European colonization of the Americas, may seem like a contradictory choice. This choice is contradictory and that is exactly the novel's point. *Future Home of the Living God* is a novel about embracing ambiguity and finding solutions in contradictions to combat societal power structures that seek to destroy or harness life. In order to combat oppressive power structures, this novel argues, we must indigenize our contemporary belief systems and social relationships.

"Oral tradition" is a genre convention often mentioned in literary theory and criticism when discussing the features of North American Indigenous literature and culture. Contemporary understanding of oral tradition in Western society is that it is a hallmark feature of non-European storytelling. However, one European literary genre popularized during the Middle Ages pushes back on this common assumption about oral storytelling: hagiography. In *Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the Middle Ages*, Thomas Heffernan tells us that this genre of literature recalls the stories of the lives of saints, which were "sacred stories designed to teach the faithful to imitate actions which the community had decided were paradigmatic" (5). Hagiography is a Judeo-Christian, European genre of literature popularized in

1 "Indigenous" is capitalized as a descriptor throughout this essay to indicate that it is a literary genre and an ethnic category, not simply an adjective.

the Middle Ages; it was an oral tradition first, as all storytelling was prior to written language, with ancient roots beyond its Judeo-Christian origins. In fact, researchers agree that the motifs within the genre of "sacred biography" date back to Classical Greece and Rome, and therefore reflect the most essential cultural values of the foundation of Western society. Heffernan expands on these origins, telling us that "this narrative of miraculous anecdote, indicative of character, appears to have been in existence for some time prior to the formation of the Gospels and is known to have been widely used in the Hellenized Semitic communities of ancient Palestine" (Heffernan 31). These "miraculous anecdotes" and myths about heroes were passed down orally within the community to reiterate the societal values exemplified by the protagonist of the story. As the narrative form of these oral legends was appropriated into Christian communities, cults for the heroes (now called "saints") were formed. In her chapter, "Hagiography in Context: Images, Miracles, Shrines and Festivals," Samantha Riches tells us that these cults were formed for veneration of the saint, where members would call upon the saint to cure illnesses and intervene in their lives. Pilgrimages, offerings, and other forms of payment soon became part of cult practices. Riches says these activities were not relegated exclusively to the private sphere, and that "both historical and contemporary religious practice can be usefully characterized as a largely communal activity, where people choose to join together on some level with others to engage in acts of veneration, contrition and so forth" (26). In other words, the oral storytelling about the venerated saint helped form the imagined community of the cult. In the Middle Ages, as the Vatican sought to consolidate its authority in the eleventh century, written narratives "became a part of the Vatican's apparatus of canonization" and in doing so, the narratives gained a more "official" status than oral accounts. As the sacred biographer gained Church-ordained authority, "the oral witness became the product of the provincial, the rustic, and, as such, from the twelfth century lost its former importance within the tradition of the sacred tale" (Heffernan 25). This shift from collective storytelling to a singular author changed the content and composition of these narratives. Where before, "the governing cultural stories within an oral society were reinterpreted in light of present experience," these written narratives become frozen in time with stagnant meanings and interpretations. Oral tradition, according to Heffernan,

> ensures that the past is never completely divorced from the present, never becomes a foreign artifact, but is always within the realm of the familiar. Indeed, since the past resides within the memory, the society is never alienated from its past. Critical access to and empathetic understanding of the past is not a problem. (23)

Western society, influenced by the authority of the Catholic Church through the cultural apparatus of the Vatican, projected conservative agendas onto European culture through the hagiographic narrative. Saints' lives, in written form, instructed readers

to embody values and characteristics divorced from their present experience, and therefore disconnected from their past. How then, might an Indigenous writer utilize this genre to write a vision for the future?

It is in invoking the genre of hagiography and the stories of the lives of saints, evident from the first few pages of the novel, in a text set in the future, that the reader gets the first glimpse at the way the text collapses time and demonstrates the indigenization of traditions, beliefs, and world views in a post-colonial culture. In ancient Judeo-Christian culture, oral legends served a social function in the formation of cults, and their public and private veneration activities. These cultural traditions are now lost or devalued in contemporary Western societies, but collective memory and oral tradition remain an integral part of Indigenous culture in North America (Tsethlikai and Rogoff 569). In both ancient Judeo-Christian traditions and contemporary North American oral storytelling, creation and participation in collective memory, focused on the veneration of a divine or heroic individual, typified the values of the community. Ojibwe oral storytelling and Judeo-Christian hagiography blend together in *Future Home* when Cedar Songmaker becomes an author of the sacred biography of Kateri Tekakwitha through her descriptions of her personal relationship with the saint. As the character's last name suggests, Cedar is a maker and teller of narrative. She creates a written account of the miracles and calls for intercession of "Blessed Kateri" throughout the text, which is a novel in the form of a diary written for Cedar's unborn child. In doing so, the text combines the ancient and pre-Christian oral origins of hagiography (the oral stories about Kateri) with the contemporary form of a written narrative (Cedar's journal). This blending shows the similarities between North American Indigenous culture with ancient Judeo-Christianity by unearthing and privileging the oral tradition they both share. Although written in diary form, Cedar's accounts of Kateri are not just her own—she records the collective experiences, encounters, and venerations of Kateri on the Native American reservation where she was born, and where her birth family still resides. In the beginning of the novel, after reconnecting with her birth mother Sweetie, Cedar attends a tribal council meeting with her in which her birth mother is petitioning to erect a monument for Blessed Kateri, "where people swear they have seen an apparition three times in the past four years" (Erdrich 22). Here, Cedar's new-found religious beliefs connect her to the birth family she was separated from, as they share Catholic (or "pagan Catholic," in Sweetie's words) beliefs too. Cedar records the testimonies of the kin of her tribe as both an oral and written account of Kateri's sacred biography. This biography is implicitly approved by the Vatican, as Kateri was canonized by Pope Benedict in 2012 so that Cedar becomes the authorized biographer of the saint. The novel also indigenizes contemporary belief systems when the reservation's council members vote to approve the placement of Kateri's statue in the center of their community. In this novel, Kateri's hagiography is transformed

and indigenized. The recent sightings of the saint by community members are retold orally and made sacred by the reservation's spiritual community standards, much like the Vatican's. Cedar literally rewrites Kateri's sacred biography in her diary for the next generation of Ojibwe peoples.

The novel also expands and indigenizes the definition of family and kinship through Cedar's Ojibwe community, birth family, and her own pregnancy. Mapping the narratives of Cedar and Kateri's lives makes their respective kinship networks resonant and meaningful. The novel operates as somewhat of a frame tale, as it includes an indigenized version of Kateri's hagiography within it and functions as Cedar's hagiography in and of itself. Kateri's traditional and colonial hagiography begins with her birth in 1656 in Osserneion, NY, as a child of a Christian Algonquin mother and a Mohawk father. Her parents and brother were killed during the smallpox epidemic, but she survived—her face scarred, her health frail, and her vision impaired for the rest of her life. She encountered Jesuit missionaries while living with extended family in her community, and eventually requested religious instruction, despite being ostracized from her Indigenous community. She was baptized at the age of twenty and subsequently moved to the Kahnawake mission in French Canada. While at the mission, according to her Jesuit hagiographers, "Kateri made a formal vow of virginity and practiced extreme austerities and devotion such as flagellations, branding, exposure, and fasting" (Holmes 90). Kateri lived at the mission for two years and died there in 1680 at age twenty-four. Cedar Songmaker is also an Indigenous woman, living more than four hundred years later, who seeks out Catholicism, despite her adopted family's discouragement. It is in seeking her birth family that the audience understands both the impetus for Cedar's journey to Catholicism and the ways in which the text indigenizes social relationships. While it may seem counterintuitive to try and indigenize the understanding of contemporary kinship networks through an Ojibwe narrator that is adopted by white parents and converts to Catholicism against their wishes, Erdrich's text does so by complicating modern understandings of Western culture. In the novel, Cedar seeks out her birth parents and finds many similarities between herself and her mother, grandmother, and little sister, even though she knew nothing about them until she meets them for the first time as an adult. Catholicism is the most striking cultural similarity between all of the Songmaker women; a contemporary American reader does not expect Indigenous characters in North America to embrace the religion that was used to colonize and brutalize them.

Catholicism and religious conversion were violent tools used during European colonization of the Americas to destroy Indigenous culture and community. The novel presents this uncanny connection between Cedar and her birth family to highlight the elements of Catholicism that transcend race, ethnicity, and time, and in doing so the text makes its argument about the blending and reappropriation of

(in other words, indigenizing) things that seem inherently contradictory. The novel adds to these contradictions about culture, religion, and kinship with the inclusion of Kateri Tekakwitha's hagiography. She was rejected by her Indigenous kinship network because she embraced Catholicism, while Cedar was rejected by her white, European-American family for the same reason. This becomes more complicated by Cedar's discovery that her birth father is also her adopted father. The juxtaposition of these two hagiographies with each other blends Catholicism/colonization and Indigeneity/pre-colonialism to provide the reader with possibilities for society's future through the redefinition of kinship networks. Cedar tells us that, after her adoptive mother gives her a letter from her birth mother and she begins to learn about her family of origin, she wants her unborn child to "enter the web of connections that [she] never really had" (Erdrich 6). Cedar recalls feeling lonely, isolated, and hypervisible for most of her life, being an Ojibwe girl raised by white parents in a white community. Upon finding out about her birth family, Cedar writes in her journal:

> I embraced Catholicism in my crisis-creating year, at first as a form of rebellion, but also in an effort to get those connections. I wanted an extended family—a whole parish of friends. It was no passing phase and I have integrated both my ethnicity and my intellectual leanings into my faith by analyzing the canonization of the Lily of the Mohawks, Kateri Tekakwitha. (Erdrich 6)

For a contemporary Ojibwe woman, adopted by liberal white parents in a fictional future, embracing Catholicism is "rebellious." Cedar, feeling isolated because of her racial and ethnic otherness in her community, seeks "extended family," which she uses interchangeably with the word "friends." Cedar's experience of being othered brings her back to a religion that colonized her birth family's culture, and she embraces this religion through the veneration of an Indigenous woman. What the novel writes here, with the redefining of kinship networks through Catholicism, is what Paula Elizabeth Holmes in her article "The Narrative Repatriation of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha" calls counterhagiography.

It was also considered "rebellious" for Kateri to embrace Catholicism as an Indigenous woman. She was shunned by family and community members in her Mohawk village when she embraced the religion. Over the last four hundred years, the narrative about Kateri's path to Catholicism has been told in different versions, the first and most well-known one being what Allan Greer calls her "colonial hagiography," in which her sacred life is recounted by the Jesuit missionaries that converted her. Colonial hagiography is a genre "seemingly designed to glorify the white missionary, which habitually enlisted Indians either as figures of menace or as tokens of successful evangelizing" (Greer 346). The first written narrative of Kateri emphasizes her spiritual achievements as they relate to the white missionaries who convert her. What makes her spirituality so exceptional is the fact that she overcame her "savage" origins. For colonial hagiography, the author is not a collective audi-

ence, as it was in the oral tradition of legends before the written genre, but instead the singular authority of the missionary, writing to justify his missionary work. In this version, Kateri is a silent and passive hero. In the counterhagiography of Kateri, included in Erdrich's novel, she plays a much different role, as does the audience. Holmes, in her three-year long study on Kateri, notes that "Kateri is a multi-sited phenomenon, [...] and therefore, following her stories, colonial and contemporary, requires exploration of many 'locales'—text, person, and myth" (Holmes 89). Holmes interviewed New Mexico Pueblo women about their knowledge and experience with Kateri and found that there are numerous versions of her hagiography, apparitions, and miracles; this is what Holmes means when she uses the term "counterhagiography" and "narrative repatriation." From an anthropological perspective, Holmes has recorded the contemporary oral stories of Indigenous communities about Kateri to demonstrate how her Catholicism has been indigenized. This process of indigenizing Catholicism continues through Kateri's sacred biography as it appears in *Future Home*; by including an indigenized version of Kateri, a saint who performs miracles and appears to other Natives, the text argues that a Christian text can be blended with legends, values, and symbols from non-Western culture and create new belief systems and kinship networks (relationships outside of the nuclear birth family) through these transcendent elements. This text re-envisions the past to create an indigenized present that facilitates a pathway forward for its globalized audience.

Erdrich's text begs many questions about how the blending of dualities, such as whether these contradictions can be beneficial or dangerous. In Cedar's Catholicism, and therefore Kateri's counterhagiography, the reader sees an example of a blending of two ideas or concepts that seem opposed. When combined and reappropriated, they open up paths to liberation—paths to flourishing life—for marginalized groups. The marginalized group of most concern in this text is pregnant women, as human genetics seem to be changing and "malfunctioning" in unpredictable patterns in the human womb. Erdrich's text contrasts this indigenizing of dualities with examples of blendings that result in an entity that tries to harm or harness life. The Church of the New Constitution, the far-right religious government that comes to power in the United States in this speculative fiction, is a blending of Church and State that results in an oppressive regime that imprisons birthing people and takes away their infants after birth. This text argues that what is more important than the language we assign to an identity or a concept, like "Catholic" or "Indigenous," are the ideas or the values constituted by those labels. In other words, the text's indigenization allows readers to imagine creating their own social realities and engaging in restorative justice in the contemporary world. By blending multiple dualities, Erdrich argues that belief systems and stratified identities are harmful when they banish or nullify each other, but beneficial when they amalgamate and integrate, creating new pluralized identities and values. The indigenization of dualities is an

invitation to the imagined community of readers—a global community shaped by colonialism—to envision themselves in a collective, cooperative future. At the end of the text, after Cedar has given birth to her child and the infant is taken away, she writes this last line in her diary to that child: "Where will you be, my darling, the last time it snows on earth?" (Erdrich 267). This final question is another blending—both an acceptance of the future (like the inevitability of climate change and the institutions of power beyond her control) and an encouragement to the audience to imagine the way they will indigenize the future. To adapt is to be Indigenous, and Erdrich's *Future Home of the Living God* asks the reader to consider how they may adapt in these challenging circumstances, to the ever-changing social stratifications and political upheaval on a global scale.

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The Monster and Aesthetic Theory

Melinda Quach

Introduction

Frankenstein, a Gothic novel written by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, is about a genius-turned-mad scientist who creates a living being—a Monster—through science, then runs away from his responsibility toward it. Thus, as a newborn, the Monster has to gradually learn both about himself and how to fend for himself. He is rejected by humans at every turn and never manages to find any other being that resembles himself. In essence, then, his identity is never directly determined in the text. This does not mean that he has no identity at all. Instead, the very fact that he fits in with neither human nor animal already indicates what he is not. But beyond what he is not, we must ask what he is. To answer this, one might first examine the Monster's appearance. According to Shelley's novel, the Monster is undeniably ugly:

> … his yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion, and straight black lips. (Shelley 35)

While the Monster is made of human parts, he does not look like a human at all. He is taken as a "monster" because of his appearance. From this, it can be asserted that appearance, or aesthetics, is deeply connected to his identity. In what follows, the Monster's identity will be determined through an exploration of theories of aesthetic judgment.

Aesthetics and aesthetic theory flourished in the late eighteenth century, especially among the Romantics. This was because the aesthetic concept of the sublime, as Simon Court explains, was central to the Romantics' view of the world, providing them "a theoretical foundation and a legitimacy to their artistic expression" (Court, par. 1). In the eighteenth century, the sublime was defined by two philosophers: Edmund Burke, a political theorist and Irish statesman, and Immanuel Kant, a German philosopher. According to Burke, the sublime is that which evokes the ideas and feelings of danger, pain, or terror through its size or magnitude (Burke 471-473). The feelings that the sublime object evokes, though, are delightful, as the sublime can only be felt at a distance from the source of the fear or terror (Burke 472). Kant also believes that the sublime is both fearful and attractive at a distance, and is the feeling caused by encountering something of great size or magnitude. However, he goes one step further by explaining that the sublime surpasses all limits and evokes

the idea of infinity (Burke 447). Kant states that the sublime does not depend on the object itself, but on the human response to it (Burke 447). These expanded definitions reveal why there is not a definite definition for the sublime or, by extension, the other aesthetic concepts. According to Thomas Weiskel, the study of the sublime has been analyzed, broken up into parts, and expanded upon by countless scholars, with the result that we have been left "no perspective which can really claim priority" (Weiskel 5). Thus, it is hard to say which definition of the sublime, and therefore, other aesthetic concepts, is the most fitting for the analysis of *Frankenstein*. However, considering that each successive definition of the theory builds upon the previous ones, a reasonable solution is to choose the most current version to analyze. Doing so ensures we are looking at the text through the most refined adaptation of aesthetic theory.

Nonetheless, choosing the version by its dating does not mean choosing any version at random. After all, Mary Shelley would not have been able to read a work published in the twenty-first century and incorporate it in *Frankenstein*. While she could not read the most current texts available to her twenty-first-century readers, it is well known that she would have been familiar with the most recent texts of her time. In the eighteenth century, the two most recent texts on the aesthetic theory were Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) and Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1790). Of the two texts, Kant's is the more recent; however, it cannot be the only one *Frankenstein* is examined against because, as Denise Gigante states, "while Kant's third *Critique* transforms Burke's empiricist aesthetics substantially, it does not deviate from his basic assumption about the ugly, that it is a shadow form of the beautiful, its silent, invisible partner" (Gigante 565). In other words, while Immanuel Kant refined and expanded upon Edmund Burke's theories of the beautiful and the sublime, he left the theory of the ugly unchanged. Any other work could be examined in light of Kant's work alone. However, for *Frankenstein*, and especially for examining the Monster, it is not possible to examine him with just Kant's version of the theory, since the Monster's ugliness was one of the main reasons behind his being rejected by humankind. Thus, Kant's theory of the sublime, the beautiful, and art, and Burke's theory of the ugly must be used together to determine whether the Monster's identity accommodates the concept of the sublime, the beautiful, the ugly, art, or a mixture of all four categories.

The Monster as The Sublime

When compared against the beautiful and the sublime, the Monster appears more the latter than the former. Like the sublime, which is both frightening and beyond limit, he is a fearsome entity capable of feats beyond human ability. An example of this is his superhuman strength. Felix of the De Lacy family would "spen[d] a great part of each day collecting wood for the family fire" (Shelley 77). Conversely,

the Monster needed only one night to bring "home firing sufficient for the consumption of several days" (Shelley 77). Though his alarming strength should theoretically qualify him to be defined by the sublime, he cannot be put into this aesthetic category because he falls short of one important criterion: the evocation of delight. According to both Burke and Kant, the sublime must evoke a sense of delight in its observer. Of course, this is only true when the observer is a safe distance away from the thing being considered. The Monster, whether observed from a distance or otherwise, does not produce such delight. Through the Monster's creator, Victor Frankenstein, readers are told what emotions surface instead at the sight of the Monster:

> its gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect, more hideous than belongs to humanity, instantly informed me that it was the wretch, the filthy dæmon, to whom I had given life. What did he there? Could he be (I shuddered at the conception) the murderer of my brother? No sooner did that idea cross my imagination, than I became convinced of its truth; my teeth chattered, and I was forced to lean against a tree for support. The figure passed me quickly, and I lost it in the gloom. Nothing in human shape could have destroyed that fair child. He was the murderer! I could not doubt it. (Shelley 50)

Victor responded to the Monster's hideous appearance by succumbing to abject terror and intense anger, the opposites of joy and delight. It could be argued that Victor's strong negative response here is situationally appropriate since the Monster had murdered his younger brother. We see from Felix, Agatha, and Safie, though, that this reaction to the Monster is not unique to Victor. The De Lacey family reacted with similar "horror and consternation" (Shelley 94) when they first saw him. Though the Monster saved Safie from drowning, the terror Felix felt in his presence compelled him to shoot the Monster. Because the Monster does not produce for his observers a feeling of delight, he cannot be considered a sublime being.

Nevertheless, that does not mean that the Monster does not hold some sublime qualities. Akin to how he fulfills certain qualities of the sublime through abilities, he also possesses other sublime traits. Barbara Freeman argues that:

> just as Kant's most general definition of the sublime is bound up with magnitude ("We call that *sublime* which is *absolutely great* ... the sublime is that in comparison with which everything else is small"), so the word "monster" is defined most frequently as something of huge and often unmanageable proportions. An initial rapport between sublimity and monstrosity, then, consists in their enormity, their almost unnatural size. (Freeman and Kant qtd. 27)

In sum, both the sublime and the monstrous are similar to one another due to their dependance upon size. Yet, Freeman's explanation does not grant the sublime to the Moster because it still does not account for attraction. After all, as Kant argues, the sublime invokes both a sense of displeasure from being unable to comprehend the magnitude of that object and a sense of pleasure from a lack of knowledge of

the object means that humans are still striving toward reason and rationality (Kant 451). The sublime and the monstrous, that is to say, the Monster, may be similarly absolute in size and magnitude. But, in comparison, the former attracts people despite its terrifying nature, while the Monster is completely rejected because of his horrifying appearance. For example, the violent storm between Belrive and Copêt and the appearance of the Monster in volume 1 (Shelley 50), both can be considered overwhelming and fearsome in their own right. However, Victor admires only the storm—which, according to Kant's definition, is considered sublime because it is an example of natural destruction and chaos (Kant 446)—for its beauty. On the other hand, he displays a strong sense of disgust and hostility toward the Monster (the monstrous), having called him "the wretch, the filthy dæmon, to whom I had given life" (Shelley 50). Thus, it can be said that the monstrous, and therefore, the Monster, cannot truly be considered sublime. However, because the monster does exhibit certain sublime traits, his identity also cannot exclude the sublime. Therefore, in a way, the Monster identifies with the sublime, but not completely.

The Monster as The Beautiful

Given what we have considered so far, if the Monster is only partially sublime, then he is also likely partially beautiful. After all, following the concept of the sublime, the second most important concept in the aesthetic theory is the category of the beautiful. However, according to Kant's concept of the beautiful, the statement of beauty must be universally valid (Kant 436). Thus, every character in Shelley's novel must agree to the Monster's beauty. However, the near opposite happens, as the characters either fear him or are horrified by him. This is exemplified by Victor's feelings of "horror and disgust" toward the Monster, Felix, Safie, and Agatha's "horror and consternation" at the sight of him, the "rustic" father's actions of running away as soon as he saw him, and Robert Walton, the ship captain's opinion, who said he had never seen "a vision so horrible as his face" (Shelley 36, 94, 99, 158). Since universal validity is required to make a judgment on aesthetic taste, then the Monster cannot be considered beautiful, but horrid and fearful instead. Indeed, the consensus among the rest of the characters is that the Monster is fearsome and horrid in appearance. However, although not every character agrees that the Monster is beautiful, he was originally intended to be beautiful. When obtaining the materials for the Monster's body, the Monster had proportionate arms and legs so that "his [outward form would be] beautiful" (35). Thus, while the Monster does not fully fit Kant's definition of the beautiful, he still embodies some sort of beauty, albeit as separate parts and limbs, rather than as a whole being.

Nevertheless, since the beauty of the Monster's pre-assembled parts was only determined by a single person, Victor, that declaration of beauty remains partial, especially when one factors in the fact that Victor is a morally suspect person, as shown in the text:

> Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs. (33)

His ambition to create a being in his own image, as God was said to have created Adam, may have affected his judgment of beauty. After all, he might have seen the Monster's body parts as beautiful because he had been seeing his own beautiful and glorious future in those parts, rather than the parts as they were. This would then explain why he thought the parts were "beautiful" when he selected them but then found the assembled being hideous despite the "beauty" of its parts. According to Kant, this judgment of beauty would not be considered pure because it is connected to an interest (Kant 432). Because it is an impure judgment, it is also invalid. In this light, the Monster cannot reliably be considered beautiful if only Victor has deemed his body parts beautiful.

A problem with this conclusion, however, is that Kant later invalidates this claim on the impurity of judgment to a certain extent, as he states that there is no objective rule for what makes an object beautiful, because it is impossible to have a specific criterion for beauty that can be universally agreed upon (437). Therefore, it can be argued that the Monster's limbs may have been aesthetically beautiful. After all, despite the interest tied to Victor's claims, technically, there can be no rule about the validity of beauty through purity. Thus, Victor's description of the beauty of the Monster's limbs is technically still valid. This is especially the case since Victor does not only describe the Monster's limbs as beautiful but as proportionate. The reason for this is that, according to Barry Bogin and Maria Inês Varela-Silva, proportions are important in determining how beautiful a person is, as proportionate limbs, especially legs, are "often considered a sign of health and fertility" (Bogin and Varela-Silva par. 1). Thus, because they are described as proportionate, the Monster's limbs can be considered beautiful to a certain extent. In addition to this, his limbs are also considered beautiful because they were made naturally, rather than by artificially. So, since they are natural, they would have embodied a sense of free beauty, according to Kant's theory (Kant 441). In conclusion, although the Monster cannot be considered beautiful as a whole, he can be said to embody a sense of beauty in his limbs.

The Monster as The Ugly

The Monster’s beauty only exists in the individual parts of his body. As a whole, the Monster is still considered aesthetically displeasing, since, adhering to Kant's idea of universally valid judgment, his appearance is universally confirmed as either ugly or hideous. This is, again, underscored by how Victor had described him as both ugly and hideous; William, Victor's brother, had called him ugly and

hideous to his face, and Walton viewed him as hideous (Shelley 36, 100, 158). Even the Monster calls himself hideous at least five times in the book (83, 89, 91, 92, 102). Nonetheless, using Kant's method of identifying beauty through universal validity to identify the ugly may cause that judgment to become invalid, as it was not meant to be used to identify the ugly in the first place. In fact, according to Kant, the category of the ugly should not even exist in the first place, because "the ugliness that cannot be denied in nature must be represented within given aesthetic categories, namely the beautiful or the sublime, for to present the ugly qua ugly would make the viewer turn away in disgust—and hence obviate all aesthetic judgment" (Gigante 577). In other words, because ugliness would disgust people and cause them to lose both their sense of aestheticism, it should not exist as its own category, but rather as part of either the beautiful or the sublime. Therefore, the Monster is theoretically unable to identify as the ugly, as it is not a category to be identified with in the first place.

There is more to say about this conclusion yet, since it contradicts Kant's previous idea that "that subjective [feature] of a presentation which cannot at all become an element of cognition is the pleasure or displeasure connected with that presentation" (Kant 430; emphasis in the original). In other words, it contradicts the idea that a person's subjective sense of aesthetics stems from either the pleasure or displeasure they feel when looking at the object presented. If the ugly cannot be a category because of its propensity to cause disgust and displeasure, it could be assumed that subjective judgement would be purely pleasure based. However, this is not the case. According to Kant, subjective judgment can involve either a feeling of pleasure or displeasure toward the object presented. Therefore, the ugly cannot be merely a subordinate concept to either the beautiful or the ugly. It becomes a separate category of its own.

Although Kant did not allow for the category of the ugly in his aesthetic theory, that does not mean that it does not exist at all. As Gigante says in her analysis of Burke's idea of the ugly, it exists as "a shadow form of the beautiful, its silent, invisible partner" (Gigante 565). Particularly it exists in Burke's theory, which states that the ugly is the reverse of everything beautiful (574). Thus, the idea that the Monster identifies with the ugly is still valid to a certain extent. After all, based on this definition the various characters' confirmation of both the Monster's ugliness and hideousness also confirms that he is the opposite of beautiful, and is, therefore, ugly. But if the Monster is ugly and the ugly is the opposite of the beautiful, then how can he be also beautiful? The answer to this lies in the proportion of his limbs. According to Burke, "'though ugliness be the opposite to beauty, it is not the opposite to proportion and fitness. For it is possible that a thing may be very ugly with any proportions, and with a perfect fitness to any uses"' (Burke qtd. 574). Thus, although the ugly is the opposite of the beautiful, this does not mean that an ugly being cannot have a proportionate body. So, per this line of thought, since proportion is related to

beauty, then Monster can still identify with the ugly despite having already identified with the beautiful to a certain extent, since the ugly does not disallow proportionate beauty. Thus, the Monster can identify with both the beautiful and the ugly.

The Monster as Art

In addition to identifying with both the beautiful and the ugly, the Monster identifies with Kant's theory of art to a certain extent. According to Kant, art is the end result of freedom of choice based on reason (Kant 457). This mirrors Victor's attitudes as he creates the Monster, as he freely chooses to bring a nonliving being to life through science in order to stretch the boundaries between life and death "and pour a torrent of light into our dark world" (Shelley 33). While his idea of defying death is not exactly reasonable, his use of science, a rational field of study, to accomplish his goal to defy allows it to fit within Kant's requirements of reason. Thus, regarding Kant's direct definition of art, the Monster can be considered to have embodied the aesthetic concept of art to a certain extent. However, he does not completely embody the concept of art because, according to Kant, art is different from science. Specifically, science involves putting theories into practice, while not all of the theories generated in art can be put into practice (Kant 458). In the Monster's case, his existence was theorized, then created through science. Therefore, he is more of a creation of science than of art. However, as indicated by his relations to the concepts of the beautiful, sublime, and ugly, being more of one concept than another does not mean that the Monster can only identify with the concept that he is most like. Instead, it just means that he is able to identify with every concept to some extent. So, in regards to art, the Monster is able to partially identify with it.

The Monster as an Amalgamation

Ultimately, the Monster can be partially identified with with Immanuel Kant’s and Edmund Burke's theories of the sublime, the beautiful, the ugly, and art. Yet, while his identity embraces all of these concepts, he does not embody any of them completely. Instead, he only manages to identify with various parts of each concept. So, in a way, it can be said that the Monster is a being isolated from every other being. Therefore, a reasonable definition of a monster is that which is *an amalgamation of many concepts and beings, some of which are starkly at odds with each other*. Victor's Monster is an amalgamation of both Kant’s and Burke's aesthetic concepts of the sublime, the beautiful, the ugly, and art.

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Insanity, Language, and the Postmodern Woman: Determining Language Structures in Kang Han's *The Vegetarian*

Kayla Rogers

What does it mean to be a female writer in a male-dominated world? Throughout most of history, literary representations of female experiences have been contained within male ideals. Language, and, therefore, the written word is a male construction that has repressed the female voice. However, there has been a persistent insurgence of new voices and perspectives in literature, including different evaluations of womanhood, which has led to the inevitable problem of trying to express identities that fall outside of male-conceived binary structures. Female writers, critics, and philosophers have, for nearly a century, called out the patriarchal and masculinist language structures that force limited identities onto women. Most recently, postmodern writers have begun to rework these structures in even more radical ways, transforming them into new, exciting forms that have opened the door for wholly novel expression and voice. Kang Han's *The Vegetarian* represents one possible transformation of the postmodern female identity. It does this by breaking down the patriarchal language structures that contain women and define how their reality is perceived. By blurring the boundaries that separate binary identity structures, Han presents the power of female experiences in a postmodern world.

Traditional representations of women in literature have always been limited by language. In her novel *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf argues that the gender binary in literature effectively reduces the representations of women into "alterations between heavenly goodness and hellish depravity" (860). In this way, male-dominated language structures have perpetuated gender roles by limiting representations of women in literature. This is reflected in familiar tropes such as the damsel in distress, the submissive housewife, the heartless temptress, or the isolated spinster. Women who fall outside of the typical representations of ethereal, meek, and beautiful feminine figures are condemned as evil, immoral, or insane. In either case, women are presented as falling into a single category on the good/bad binary identity structure. These gendered expectations are at work in *The Vegetarian*, in which it quickly becomes apparent what the expectation of an ideal woman is.

The Vegetarian centers around a South Korean woman, Yeong-Hye, who, for reasons unknown, suddenly refuses to eat meat. Mr. Cheong, her husband, explains that his wife used to be very "unremarkable" (Han 10), the kind of "ordinary wife who went about things without any distasteful frivolousness" (Han 12). Throughout the course of the novel, Mr. Cheong comes to represent the gender stereotypes that

patriarchal language perpetuates. The problem with Mr. Cheong, and, with patriarchal language in general, is that he only perceives his wife in terms of his "carefully ordered existence" and is unable to comprehend her identity outside of their marriage and traditional Korean notions of womanhood (Han 12) It is apparent early on in the novel that the ideal woman is quiet, meek, and dutiful, yet, as Woolf and many others have pointed out, this kind of one-dimensional portrayal has robbed literature of the rich complexity of diverse female experiences. Furthermore, for these kinds of female experiences to be heard, women must first confront the male-dominant language system that has repressed the female voice in the first place.

The inherently repressive nature of language emerges as a problem in postmodern literature when it becomes impossible to portray anything that falls outside the strict language binaries such as good/bad, light/dark, male/female, and so on. In *The Vegetarian*, Yeong-hye barely speaks. When she is questioned about her refusal to eat meat, her initial response, "I had a dream" (Han 16), is insufficient because it goes against male reasoning and logic, and so she is immediately condemned as insane by her husband and family. Yeong-hye's husband, Mr. Cheong doesn't display any curiosity, empathy, or compassion for the transformative event his wife is experiencing, and because Yeong-hye acts outside of her husband's expectations of her as a woman and his wife, she only invokes fear and uncertainty since he can no longer define her: "But for some reason I found myself unable to touch her. I didn't even want to reach out to her with words" (Han 17). Those around her further attempt to define her reasoning by assuming that her refusal to eat meat is due to some mental disturbance or her desire for a different physical appearance, but nobody is able to consider that Yeong-hye's reasoning falls outside male expectations regarding the female identity. Yeong-hye herself is fully embedded in this gender system. It is because she is unable to properly express herself through the dominant language structures that she refuses to speak. Her short simplistic statements are representative of the wider limitations of the female voice in a male-dominated language system.

According to the French feminist theorist Hélène Cixous, it is impossible to define female writing because it falls outside of traditional binary logic. The only way for women to truly express themselves is by breaking free of the patriarchal binary structure by creating their own language, one that represents the diverse range of female experience and identity (Cixous 1870-1871). The difference between male and female language is represented in *The Vegetarian* through the difference in point-of-view between Yeong-hye and the other characters in the novel. The point-of-view of most of the characters, including Yeong-hye's sister, adopts the traditional logic of the male perspective. However, the point-of-view of Yeong-hye is told almost exclusively in short sections throughout the novel. Yeong-hye's use of language is an imaginative use of stream-of-consciousness, which relies heavily upon visual imagery and symbolism to portray tone and feeling:

> *Dreams of murder.*
> *Murderer or murdered…. Hazy distinctions, boundaries wearing thin. Familiarity bleeds into strangeness, certainty becomes impossible. Only the violence is vivid enough to stick. A sound, the elasticity of the instant when the metal struck the victim's head…. The shadow that crumpled and fell gleams cold in the darkness.* (Han 35; original italics)

Dreams, inherently "illogical," become a privileged means through which Kang represents Yeong-hye's thoughts and effectively function as a means of representing the female language. Outside of the world of male logic and reasoning, dreams rely upon visuality to portray emotion. What is important is only the expression of feeling that represents that individual reality.

In addition to needing to break free from the limits of patriarchal language, women, according to Cixous, "write through their bodies" (1878). Cixous goes on to explain that, for centuries, women have been conditioned to be ashamed of their bodies, and only by breaking free from this suppression can women be free to express themselves through language. In *The Vegetarian*, the female body represents empowerment and freedom, and the liberation of the body is shown throughout Yeong-hye's physical and spiritual transformation. Certainly, her special relationship to her body is present even before she makes the conscious decision to stop eating meat. For example, her husband remarks upon her "unusual" habit of refusing to wear a bra. With Cixous in mind, this seemingly small habit can be seen to represent a subconscious rebellion against the constricting gender roles that men, such as her husband, have imposed on her. Notably, this slight act of rebellion evokes a range of emotions from her husband-- uncertainty, embarrassment, and even rage: "and to my utter mortification I saw that the outline of her nipples was clearly visible through the fabric" (Han 29). Yet, however slight, Yeong-hye's choice represents an important step in Yeong-hye's struggle for control over her body and, therefore, her identity.

The men surrounding Yeong-hye all attempt to reassert control over her body. Her husband rapes her repeatedly, her father forces her to eat meat, and her brother-in-law coerces her into having sex with him. Yet despite these intrusions onto her body, Yeong-hye takes her sexuality and transforms it into an act of rebellion: "Only then did he realize what it was that had shocked him when he'd first seen her lying prone on the sheet. This was the body of a beautiful, young woman, conventionally an object of desire and yet it was a body from which all desire had been eliminated" (Han 92). Yeong-hye takes her sexuality and uses it against them. By removing the aspects of shame and desire, Yeong-hye is able to take control of her sexuality and transform her body into something new, yet undefinable: "*yes I spread my legs because I wanted flowers to bloom from my crotch, I spread them wide*" (Han 132).

In literature, whenever male language is unable to define a woman's behav-

ior into a specific identity structure, that woman is often deemed unstable or even insane. Female writers as far back as Woolf have emphasized that, despite being left out of the written record, female creativity and genius have always existed:

> *When, however, one reads of a witch being dunked, of a woman possessed by devils, of a wise woman selling herbs, or even a man who had a remarkable mother then I think we are on track of a lost novelist, a suppressed poet … who dashed her brains out on the moor or mopped and mowed the highways crazed with the torture her gift had put her to.* (858)

In this way, the representation of "insanity" can be seen as always having been a part of the female literary tradition. Years after Woolf, feminist scholars Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar would continue to speak out for a female space within literature. Women, they argue, occupy a very different literary space than men and have historically been subjected to contempt, ridicule, and institutionalization in their efforts to portray the female identity in literature. These women represent the beginning of a "female subset of literature" that opened the door for female representation in the modern and postmodern eras (Gilbert and Gubar 1946). In *The Vegetarian*, Han contests the meaning behind the male perception of insanity through Yeong-hye's desperate actions.

The suggestion that women could simply be labeled as "crazy" and then locked away in institutions is a motif that is strongly demonstrated in *The Vegetarian*. As Yeong-hye's rebellion goes beyond simple vegetarianism, her family sends her away to a mental institution that continues to use patriarchal language structures to impose a specific identity role upon her. She is labeled as anorexic, schizophrenic, and paranoid, yet she is none of those things; rather, it is the repressive language that is used to describe her that is inadequate to describe the transformative process that she is undergoing: "No one can understand me…. The doctors, the nurses, they're all the same …. They don't even try to understand…. They just force me to take medication and stab me with needles" (Han 162). When Yeong-hye continues to resist her doctor's treatment, they attempt to force her into submission through a gruesome scene of force-feeding toward the end of the novel: "The nurse's aide, who had been holding the tube, has blood spatters on her face. The blood is gushing out of the tube, out Yeong-hye's mouth" (Han 180). The doctor's anger and frustration are representative of the larger anger of men toward women who fall outside of the sick/well; sane/insane binary and they lend credence to the idea that female expression represents the "crucial tradition of uncontrollable madness" that Gilbert and Gubar identify as a central component of the female literary tradition (1850). Yeong-hye declares that "*Nobody can help me. Nobody can save me. Nobody can make me breathe*" (Han 56). In a male-dominated reality, the only person that can save Yeong-hye is herself. The only way to free herself from patriarchal control is to embrace her body: "*can only trust my breasts now. I like my breasts nothing can be*

killed by them" (Han 41). Her refusal to eat meat, her attitudes toward her body, and her refusal to conform to social norms all represent her liberation from the identity that male language has forced upon her.

According to Gilbert and Gubar, the women who risked their sanity in order to express themselves through writing represent a "distinctive history" of female literature. It is this literary hisstory that makes it possible for postmodern women to express themselves (1846). Women, Gilbert and Gubar argue, occupy a distinctly separate space from male writers and are connected to each other through their shared struggles against the patriarchal literary institution. This sisterhood of female writers are represented both literarily and symbolically within *The Vegetarian*. In addition to being actual sisters, Yeong-hye and In-hye are each other's doppelgängers. In-hye is both the twin and the opposite of her sister, Yeong-hye. In the novel, In-hye represents the male ideal of women. Not only is she described as more "feminine" than her sister (Han 35), but she is also more quiet, submissive, and a better cook. She is a dutiful wife and mother, and she never complains. Her husband describes her as "the kind of woman whose goodness is oppressive" (Han 72). In-hye has the perfect job, the perfect house, and the perfect family, yet despite her connection to the male dominated gender binary, she still remains separate from the male conception of reality. Where Mr. Cheong and her husband seek to dominate and control Yeong-hye, In-hye seeks only to understand her sister's actions. While the male characters eventually abandon Yeong-hye out of fear, only In-hye remains to care for her. Soon, In-hye's entire life begins to unravel as she loses her husband, her family, and her sense of self. The only connection she has is with Yeong-hye and in her attempt to better understand her sister's actions, she too is affected by her sister's transformation.

If women occupy a separate space from men and are connected to other women through their shared oppression, then the connection between In-hye and Yeong-hye can be interpreted as symbolic for the connection between all women in their search for their self-identity. As In-hye strives to better understand her sister, so too have previous generations of women sought to better understand their own motivations through those of their female predecessors. This physical/spiritual connection is presented in the novel in several ways. After she sends her sister away, In-hye's connection to her sister persists through a series of shared dreams, similar experiences, and a persistent feeling of déjà vu. Her dreams about her sister act like a symbolic language between them: "In the reflection, blood was trickling from her left eye. She quickly reached up to wipe the blood away, but somehow her reflection in the mirror didn't move an inch, only stood there, blood running from the eye" (Han 134). The use of blood imagery in her dreams is important because it signifies an important connection to Yeong-hye who also references blood imagery repeatedly throughout her narrative. In literature, blood can be symbolic of both life

and death. It can symbolize violence as well as familial connection and love. Like the female voice, the symbolic meaning of blood cannot be pinned down to a specific, identifying structure. Nevertheless, the symbolic use of blood and the shared physical experiences connect the two sisters. Their shared dreams are symbolic of the female space in which they are free to communicate without the limits imposed by male language systems. This can be traced back to the ideas expressed by Woolf regarding the female space, and, later, to the theories of Cixous, Gilbert, and Gubar regarding female language and the shared female identity.

To identify all women as a single group negates the diversity of female experience, culture, and identity, which, as Cixous explains, makes it impossible to define women in a single narrative (Cixous 1845). The only way to do so is to group them according to their similar struggle against men. Yeong-hye and In-hye are drastically different women, but they share an important similarity in their shared struggles against the men around them. As In-hye's life continues to fall apart, she is forced to the self-realization that her identity is not her own, but a male-imposed version of what she is *supposed* to be. She begins to understand how this male reality has imposed strict limitations on her identity. This first begins when she recalls memories from her childhood that help her realize that the "role" she had adopted—"that of the hard-working, self-sacrificing eldest daughter had not been a sign of maturity but of cowardice. It had been a survival tactic" (Han 163). This is when In-hye begins to understand that the parts of her life she thought were important were only male constructions forced upon her to make her believe that she had no other choice but to fulfill them, "just like her life had never belonged to her" (Han 170). With this knowledge, she begins to view her sister outside of the male constructions of reality:

> *She was no longer able to cope with all that her sister reminded her of. She'd been unable to forgive her for soaring alone over a boundary she herself could never bring herself to cross, unable to forgive that magnificent irresponsibility that had enabled Yeong-hye to shuck off social constraints and leave her behind, still a prisoner. And before Yeong-hye had broken those bars, she'd never even known they were there*. (Han 148).

In this way, In-hye is able to view her sister's death not as a tragedy but as a transformation. To view death as a negative is to fall into the male-constructed binary of life vs. death. As In-hye pleads with Yeong-hye not to die, her sister's simple answer, "why is it such a bad thing to die?" holds significant meaning (Han 162). Instead of exclusive categories, life and death are simply two sides of a single coin: different perspectives of the same experience. This crucial distinction becomes the center for In-hye's own transformation and can be seen as representing the collective transformation of the female identity in the postmodern world.

What if the boundaries between male and female were broken? Or what if they never existed in the first place? As Yeong-hye and In-hye each intrude upon

male spaces, so too must female writers navigate a literary space that has, for a long time, been dictated by the limits of male language. This is the message that feminist theorists such as Cixous have been proclaiming for decades. But what if Cixous' definition of a "new" woman isn't really a woman at all? Contemporary feminist writers like Donna Haraway have sought to reclaim traditionally male spaces in literature and science and have helped to dismantle the male-imposed identity structures that have been forced upon women without regard to race, ethnicity, class, or sexuality. Haraway argues that there is nothing that inherently "binds" women into a single category, and while she acknowledges the reality of gender roles in the lives of many women, she also predicts a time when such roles will no longer exist (Haraway 2050). Yeong-hye's transformation into a being of nature represents this blurring of gender boundaries that have been a defining feature in language and literature for ages.

In *The Vegetarian* Yeong-hye transcends gender by moving beyond the boundaries of identity. She becomes neither male nor female: "she lies there like a freakish, overgrown child, devoid of and secondary sexual characteristics" (Han 156). Instead, her energy is transformed into something that has no gender: "leaves were growing from my body, and roots were sprouting from my hands" (Kang 154). In essence, Yeong-hye transforms into nature itself. Similar to the way that Haraway fuses science fiction into her feminism, so too does Han blend together feminism and ecocriticism. The newly formed study of ecofeminism looks at the ways in which men attempt to dominate women in the same way they seek to dominate their environment. This is a prominent theme within the novel as both Yeong-hye and her sister are dominated by the men around them. Like the ways that man has forced control over his natural environment, Yeong-hye is raped by her husband, abused by her father, coerced by her brother-in-law, and finally subjected to brutalized force feeding by doctors. In-hye is forced by her abusive father to take on the role of the perfect daughter, and her husband forces her into the role of a perfect wife—to "just put up with it for a minute" (Kang 169)—until she becomes nothing "but a child who had never lived" (Kang 168). All of this is in an attempt to control their bodies, "the only area where you're free to do just as you like. And even that doesn't turn out the way you wanted" (Kang 182).

Haraway is particularly interested in the formation and breakdown of boundaries and identity in a postmodern world. Indeed, it has been proven that many of the aspects of identity are little more than social and environmental conditioning. By the end of the novel, In-hye realizes that the identity she thought was firmly rooted in reality is actually a transparent film that separates infinite realities that she is only beginning to become aware of:

> *if her husband and Yeong-hye hadn't smashed through all the boundaries, if everything hadn't splintered apart, then perhaps she was the one who would*

have broken down, and if she'd let that happen, if she'd let go of that thread, she might never have found it again. In that case, would the blood that Yeong-hye had vomited today have burst from her, In-hye's, chest instead? (186)

Once In-hye realizes the fundamental illusion of reality, she begins to understand that the deja vu she has been experiencing is symptomatic of the subjectivity of reality. Haraway further illustrates this breakdown in three crucial areas: the boundary between human and animal, the boundary between human /animal and machine, and the boundary between physical and non-physical space. While these spatial boundaries apply to *The Vegetarian*, they ignore a crucial fourth boundary: the boundary between humans and nature. And it is this boundary that is at the heart of the novel. Yeong-hye symbolizes the breakdown between humans and nature, and in this way, can be seen as returning to this alternate state of being. She doesn't really die; her energy is simply transformed into something different.

From this perspective, the postmodern woman isn't really about women at all. Instead, postmodern female literature seeks to break down male-imposed language structures, including those of preconceived gender roles. Insanity is simply another facet of the sane/insane identity binary that has been used to keep women under control. Perhaps Yeon-hye isn't really insane at all. Perhaps she is only having a sane reaction to an insane situation. Perhaps it is those around her who are insane. Ultimately, it isn't her husband, or brother-in-law, or her sister, or the medical establishment that confines her, but the limitations of language which robs her of the crucial right to self-expression. Without the proper words to express herself, Yeong-hye must rely upon her actions to communicate her resistance and self-control. The connection to her sister represents Yeong-hye's last remaining connection to the male-dominated reality of her past. As In-hye is awakened to the instability of her own reality, she becomes representative of an entire generation of postmodern women who seek to transform the very structure of language to find new ways to communicate their perspectives and to explore their identities.

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Undergraduate Essays

Breaking the Mold: *Kindred* and the Creation of the Postmodern Slave Narrative

CJ Alcala

Octavia Butler's *Kindred* is a postmodern slave narrative that critiques and fixes several problems that are found within traditional slave narratives. Butler does this by inverting history through speculative fiction, changing the traditional male character and perspective to a feminine one, and forces readers to be more active participants in the narrative rather than distanced voyeurs. Through this reversal of traditional conventions, Butler creates a postmodern slave narrative which teaches readers how to internalize and deepen their understanding of slavery and its influences on the present.

In order to understand how Butler breaks the mold and creates the postmodern slave narrative, it is important to understand the conventions of the original slave narratives. According to James Olney in his article, "I Was Born," the autobiographical slave narrative has firmly established conventions that create a theoretical outline that they all follow. Along with signed portraits of the narrator and poetic epigraphs, all slave narratives contain:

> [a] title page that includes the claim, as an integral part of the title, "[w]ritten by Himself" (or some close variant). A handful of testimonials and/or one or more prefaces or introductions written either by a white abolitionist friend of the narrator or by a white amanuensis/editor/author actually responsible for the text in the course of which preface the reader is told that the narrative is a "plain, unvarnished tale" and that naught "has been set down in malice, nothing exaggerated, nothing drawn from the imagination"—indeed, the tale, it is claimed, understates the horrors of slavery. (50)

In addition to this, Olney asserts that the narratives themselves follow an outline beginning with the statement, "I was born," following a linear path from birth to freedom, retelling the horrors of slavery and their subsequent escape from it. This outline includes descriptions of cruel masters/mistresses and overseers, whippings, slave auctions etc., typically ending with the narrator's reflection on slavery and appeals for support in its abolishment. The drawback of these conventions, Olney points out, is that

> what is being recounted in the slave narratives is nearly always the realities of the institution of slavery, almost never the intellectual, emotional, moral growth of the narrator. The lives of the narratives are never, or almost never, there for themselves and for their own intrinsic, unique interest but nearly always in their capacity as illustrations of what slavery is really like. (51)

Through the seemingly rigid conventions of the slave narrative, a broad depiction of

the horrors of the institution of slavery was spread amongst the masses and repeated time and again by other emancipated slaves. Due to this repetition and rigidity in form, the narratives failed to take into account the unique human growth of the narrator throughout their story. Through her study of these classic slave narratives, Butler was able to create what is considered the modern slave narrative and breathe new life into the genre.

Another important point to understand in the breaking of the slave narrative mold is how Butler reached the premise of the novel and her choice to use speculative fiction to tell her story. In an interview with Randall Kenan, Butler was asked how she came to think up *Kindred*, with her stating, "*Kindred* was a kind of reaction to some of the things going on during the sixties when people were feeling ashamed of, or more strongly, angry with their parents for not having improved things faster, and I wanted to take a person from today and send that person back to slavery" (Kenan 2). A sentiment of resentment and frustration found within the African American community towards the elders' acceptance to oppression and harsh treatment fueled not only the Black Panther and Civil Rights Movements of the 1960s, but also by Butler's need to understand the previous generations' acceptance of the status quo. This search for understanding prompted Butler to come up with the premise for *Kindred*, as she states in another interview: "I wanted to take a character, when I did *Kindred*, back in time to some of the things that our ancestors had to go through, and see if that character survived so very well with the knowledge of the present in her head" (Rowell 4). Butler believed that in order to understand the mentality of acceptance of the previous generation, one must experience what they did, and that modern hindsight was blinding hers and younger generations. To do so, Butler chose to tell her story using speculative fiction, a blend of science fiction, fantasy, and horror that is rooted in a knowledge of history. Although Butler views the term as a marketing term, she insists that there is no science behind her fictions and that "[t]ime travel is just a device for getting the character back to confront where she came from" (Kenan 2). By sending Dana Franklin, a modern twenty-six-year-old African American woman, to antebellum Maryland, Butler allows for readers to examine and confront U.S. history and slavery in ways that nineteenth-century slave narratives and sentimental stories could not. Thus, she sets to break the mold of nineteenth-century slave narratives through the flipping of its conventions and the creation of the postmodern slave narrative.

The first convention of nineteenth-century slave narratives that is flipped is an inverted version of history which allows for a deeper and better understanding of U.S. history, slavery, and its effects on modern society. The novel begins its story with Dana Franklin losing her arm, leaving the reader with little to no understanding of events. In order to understand what is happening, one must go back into Dana's past, which creates a cyclical timeline. In addition, Marc Steinberg asserts that "But-

ler assumes a non-Western conceptualization of history—one in which history is cyclical, not linear— in order to demonstrate ways in which certain forms of race and gender oppression continue late into the twentieth century and beyond" (1). Unlike traditional slave narratives focusing on a linear story of major events with a clear political point to make about slavery, the use of time travel creates a way for one to look at the oppressive effects of slavery in the past, also to draw parallels and examine the implications of the system on present day society. An example of this influence from the past is found within Dana's marriage to Kevin, a white man. Upon their teleportation into 1815 Maryland, Kevin is asked if he owns Dana. He replies, "In a way. [...] She's my wife" (Butler 34). In antebellum Maryland, their marriage is a serious and dangerous crime, yet even in 1976 their marriage is not universally accepted. This is explored through Kevin's racist sister and Dana's uncle who feels that Dana rejected him and her ancestry. Steinberg offers another example and adds:

> The western marital contract posits woman as possession in terms largely of a man's notion that his wife's body is an extension of his own. Control of one's own or another's body consists, of course, not simply of sexual authority; it consists also of an exertion of psychological power over one or more of a variety of aspects of, for, or over someone else's life. Antebellum slavery was, for bondpeople, by definition the threat if not total loss of personal integrity; Alice, after all, claims that her body is not her own, but Rufus'—"He paid for it, didn't he?" (167). And what he pays for is not only an object for his sexual gratification, but also an outlet for his violence and a living vessel over which he theoretically holds psychic dominance. (Steinberg 3)

The fact that Alice was purchased into slavery was acceptable in her time just as Dana's marriage was (mostly) accepted in hers, but one can see the oppressive influence that slavery had on this small and widely accepted part of society, as the "ownership" of people still occurs to this day through marriage contracts. Though only one example, Butler's inversion of history appears throughout the novel subtly highlighting the influence of slavery on work, personal life, and literacy in the present day. The inversion of history and conception of a cyclical timeline allows for new and deeper understanding of the present through the past.

The second convention that is toppled in *Kindred* is the use of a masculine character and in favor of feminine ones. Butler, in her interview with Rowell, stated that a male character would be killed almost immediately in Dana's stead, whereas

> [t]he female main character, who might be equally dangerous, would not be perceived so. She might be beaten, she might be abused, but she probably wouldn't be killed and that's the way I wrote it. She was beaten and abused, but she was not killed. That sexism, in a sense, worked in her favor. Although if you could take the character and give her life and ask her if she thought she had been favored, it would be likely that she wouldn't think so, because

of what she suffered. (Rowell 4)

The traditional masculine narratives can be seen as inherently violent and individualistic, focusing on the atrocities of slavery experienced by a single male character and the need for violence and brutality to escape it, either fight for freedom or die trying to be free. This is not the story that Butler wanted to tell, and by using a female instead of a male she created a disarming character that allowed for new stories to be told that were once ignored. In her Womanist reading of *Kindred*, C. S. Thembile West asserts that "Dana's dual role, as the bridge from the past and the harbinger of the future, heightens the sense of her moral agency in *Kindred*" (11). Not only are Dana's modern morals vastly different from those of 1815 Maryland, but they deeply affect her decision making. Whereas in a traditional slave narrative the protagonist will do everything in order to achieve freedom and escape bondage, Dana not only cares about her self-preservation but also takes into consideration and cares about the consequences for the whole slave community on the Weylin plantation affected by her choices. West adds, "Butler's *Kindred* is instructive for contemporary womanists and feminists because she challenges us to re-imagine the complicated decisions made by Black women as they navigate the perilous landscape of chattel enslavement" (15). These complicated decisions come up through the inclusions of stories such as Sarah's, the plantation cook. A female slave that would typically be written off as a mammy, is given depth and has her story told, having to live and care for the family of the man who sold her babies. Although Sarah could poison the Weylins at any time, she chooses not to. Rather she is thankful to them for allowing her to keep Carrie, her mute daughter, and exercising some agency within her cookhouse at the same time. Through the inclusion of the feminine perspective, these new stories are told and gaps within the history of slavery are filled.

Lastly, West states that "Dana's journey backward in time in *Kindred* draws attention to the legacy of intimate violence against Black women as it illuminates the terror and emotional wrenching posed by the ongoing threat of rape" (West 14). This ongoing fear of intimate violence and rape is one that is brushed over in history, either through the retelling of the hypersexual slave or the use of people as property. Butler highlights the ongoing threat of rape through Alice, who is attacked by Rufus and flees, then is sold to him, and finally, Dana is forced to talk Alice into laying with Rufus without resistance, reminding Alice that the alternative is facing the whip before Rufus forces himself onto her. This epitomizes the theme self-preservation or community survival argument for Dana, who needs Alice to bear her grandmother Hagar. The female perspective and the focus on women fill the gaps that traditional narratives left allowing for new interpretations and understandings of slavery and its influence on modern times.

The final convention of traditional slave narratives Butler topples is the shift from a distanced and sympathetic to an active and empathetic form when examining

the atrocities of slavery. Irina Popescu argues that sentimental narratives and stories, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, interchange sympathy and empathy, and create feelings of sympathy through depictions of bodies in pain and pity. Popescu creates a distinction between the two stating, "[sympathy] too engages the imagination to provoke fellow-feeling; however, unlike sympathy, empathy means quite literally putting yourself in another's shoes, without the prerequisite of sorrow or pity. Empathy does not (or at least should not) necessitate pain" (1). Though Butler does include violence, it is not a focal point in the story. Rather, she focuses on the emotional and psychological suffering that occurred in people that were looked over. Through Butler's depiction of the traumas of slavery and Dana's modern morality, readers are able to empathize on a deeper level with the characters and story. Popescu adds:

> [i]n continuing to move between 1976 and the mid-nineteenth century, [Dana] slowly transforms from historical voyeur to active participant in history. This transformation establishes a new ethics of reading and understanding human rights violations. In other words, through Dana's own empathetic transformation, the novel teaches us how to read atrocity without falling into voyeurism [...] *Kindred* employs a dystopic treatment of empathy in order to redefine the relationship between the violated body, the witness, and the reader. In reconfiguring this relationship, . . . the novel critiques narrative voyeurism by exposing the dangerous pitfalls of empathy grounded upon the objectification of the victim. (2-3)

Through this, Butler is able to achieve two goals within her postmodern slave narrative. First, because Dana is influenced and affected by the first-hand encounters with the atrocities of slavery, readers are taught how to read and interpret it without falling into voyeurism. Secondly, Butler critiques the traditional slave narratives which focused solely on violence, therefore, objectifying the violated and beaten bodies. This objectification of the body leads to the aforementioned sympathy and causes both witness and reader to distance themselves from the trauma becoming voyeurs of the violence and falling short of understanding the realities of slavery. Popescu reinforces this, stating "[a]s such, the representation of historical atrocity inside *Kindred* enables the development of a critical apparatus, which condemns the use of an objectified pained body as an empathetic register used by the reader in order to negotiate, to understand, and to come to terms with slavery" (3). Through Dana's experiences and Butler's ability to create empathy without objectification to the violated, a deeper connection with the narrative is created. This teaches readers how to internalize the atrocities that occurred in slavery, understand what they were, and more effectively examine their effects in the modern world.

Octavia Butler's Kindred breaks the mold of traditional nineteenth-century slave narratives by reversing three of its main literary conventions. Through the use

of an inverted history by speculative fiction, the swap of a masculine character for a feminine one, and a push for active participation rather than distanced voyeurism when examining the past. In doing so, Butler creates the postmodern slave narrative, which helps deepen readers' understanding of slavery and the influence that it has on the present.

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Horses and Whores: Leo Tolstoy's Horse Race Metaphor for the Objectification, Commodification, and Stigmatization of the Fallen Woman

CJ Alcala

In *Anna Karenina*, Leo Tolstoy writes the horse race scene as a metaphor which exaggerates the power difference between men and women, that was not only an essential part of Russian aristocratic society, but of the societies in Gustave Flaubert's novel, *Madame Bovary*, and Kate Chopin's short story, "The Awakening," creating a connection between the three works. The scene highlights and compares three key ideas: the objectification of women through Vronsky's inspection of his newly purchased horse, Frou-Frou, the commodification of women as items for entertainment and work, and the metaphorical broken back caused by the actions of men that leads to the "putting down" of all three female characters.

Just as women are judged for their appearance, so are horses. Leo Tolstoy uses Vronsky's description of Frou-Frou during his inspection of the horse in crassly similar terms to the way Emma Bovary, Edna Pontellier, and Anna are described when first introduced to their adulterous lovers. When looking over Frou-Frou, Vronsky describes her as being of

> [a]verage height and not irreproachable. She was narrow-boned all over; though her breast-bone protruding sharply, her chest was narrow. Her rump drooped slightly, and her front legs, and more especially her hind legs, were noticeably bowed inwards. The muscles of her hind and front legs were not particularly big; on the other hand, the horse was of unusually wide girth, which was especially striking now, with her trained shape and lean belly. Her leg bones below the knee seemed no thicker than a finger, seen from the front, but were unusually wide seen from the side. Except for her ribs, she looked as if she was all squeezed from the sides and drawn out in depth. But she possessed in the highest degree that made one forget the shortcomings; this quality was *blood*, that blood which *tells*, as the English say. Her muscles, standing out sharply under the web of veins stretched through the thin, mobile and satin-smooth skin, seemed strong as bones. Her lean head, with prominent, shining, merry eyes, widened at the nose into flared nostrils with bloodshot inner membranes. In her whole figure and especially in her head there was a distinctly energetic and at the same time tender expression. She was one of those animals who, it seems, do not talk only because the

mechanism of their mouths does not permit it. (Tolstoy 106)

The first factor of the description is the emphasis on the physical attributes, looking for flaws and imperfections, as well as muscles and the curves of its body. Several physical imperfections to the horse are noted, such as its bowed legs, narrow bone structure, and unusually wide frame. Despite these imperfections the horse is still striking to the eye of Vronsky. This same concept of value in appearance is found in the descriptions of Emma, Edna, and Anna. Upon seeing Emma for the first time, Rodolphe immediately comments on the figure of Emma stating, "'She's very nice!' he was saying to himself; 'she's very nice, that doctor's wife! Lovely teeth, dark eyes, a trim little foot, and a figure like a Parisian. Where the devil did she come from? Where did he find her, that gross fellow'" (Flaubert 91). This attention to physical features objectifies Emma, as if the only thing with value were her body. Like Vronsky inspects Frou-Frou, Rodolphe does the same to Emma. Shen examined by Mr. Pontellier, Edna is said to have "strong, shapely hands," and is described as "rather handsome than beautiful. Her face was captivating by reason of a certain frankness of expression and a contradictory subtle play of features. Her manners were engaging" (Chopin 16). Just like the horse close scrutiny is paid to Edna's features. The description of her hands represents her strength and health, akin to the muscles of the horse. Along with that, her facial features are described as 'handsome' and 'frank,' which are terms attributed to men, and even at times animals, seemingly lacking feminine beauty. Much like the horse, men are examining Edna and appraising her body.

As for Anna, upon being seen at the ball, she is described as having "full shoulders and bosom, as if shaped from old ivory, and her rounded arms with their very small, slender hands, . . . Around her firm, shapely neck was a string of pearls" (Tolstoy 60-61). Men, like farmers looking to breed racehorses, appraise women in the same way, objectifying them only for their body. This reinforces the notion of a female's worth being tied to the appearance and features of her body. The second key factor of Frou-Frou's description is the idea of good blood. This idea of higher or royal blood and women being more valuable because of it appears in Chopin and Flaubert as well. Edna, according to Mr. Pontellier, "comes from sound Presbyterian Kentucky stock" (Chopin 60). Though Edna is causing problems in their marriage, Mr. Pontellier believes that there is value in her blood, as if all her traits were connected to that Presbyterian Kentucky blood. The use of the word "stock" signifies a comparison of women to animals. Much like Vronsky is appraising Frou-Frou's worth from her "good blood," Mr. Pontellier appraises Edna.

In *Madame Bovary*, Charles Bovary's first wife similarly judges Emma on her pedigree. Regarding Emma she says, "[o]ld Rouault's daughter, a young lady! Come now! The grandfather was a shepherd, and they have a cousin who was nearly taken to court for striking a man viciously during a quarrel. She needn't bother to put

on such airs, nor show herself at church on Sunday in silk, like a countess" (Flaubert 28). Here, the first wife ties Emma's worth to her bloodline. She firmly believes that Emma is lower class and has less valuable blood due to her familial ties. Again, drawing from a comparison with a racehorse's bloodline, the bad traits are an essential attribute of the blood.

Lastly, the third key factor of Frou-Frou's description is the expressive and telling eyes. Much like the horse, Emma, Edna, and Anna were said to have similar eyes, a distinguishable characteristic amongst them all. Of Emma, Charles states "[w]hat was beautiful about her was her eyes: although they were brown, they seemed black because of the lashes, and her gaze fell upon you openly, with bold candor" (Flaubert 30) and Rodolphe stating that "her eyes bore into your heart like gimlets" (91). Vronsky describes Frou-Frou's eyes as emanating emotion. The same goes for Emma, as her eyes were the most expressive feature about her. The alluring "boldness" in her eyes not only draws in Charles, but all the lovers that she cheats on him with as well. One of those lovers is Rodolphe, who also takes notice of the piercing yet alluring gaze of Emma. To him, her eyes were so emotive and beautiful they went to draw affection straight from one's heart. Through her expressive eyes Rodolphe could see the lack of happiness in Emma. He says of her, "[p]oor little woman. That one's gasping for love like a carp for water on a kitchen table. With three pretty compliments, that one would adore me, I'm sure of it. It would be lovely! Charming!" (Flaubert 91). The "speaking" eyes of Emma not only pierce the heart of Rodolphe like Cupid's arrow, but express her true feelings, leaving an opening for him to exploit. Similarly expressive eyes are found in Edna as her "eyes were quick and bright; they were a yellowish brown, about the color of her hair. She had a way of turning them swiftly upon an object and holding them there as if lost in some inward maze of contemplation or thought" (Chopin 17). Edna's eyes draw people in due to the way she holds objects with them. The thoughtfulness behind them reveals her emotion and energy, akin to that of Frou-Frou. The draw for both Emma and Edna is the magnetic energy of their eyes. Just like Frou-Frou, their eyes tell more than their words ever could. Lastly, Anna's eyes are the most expressive of all. The narrator dwells on this detail:

> Her shining grey eyes, which seemed dark because of their lashes, rested amiably and attentively on his face, as if she recognized him, and at once wandered over the approaching crowd as though looking for someone. [...] Now in the brightness of her glance, now in her smile. She deliberately extinguished the light in her eyes, but it shone against her will in a barely noticeable smile. (Tolstoy 52)

Like Frou-Frou's, Anna's eyes radiate emotion and can ignite with emotion that spreads throughout her face and body. They share the ability to speak volumes through their eyes without saying a single word, a quality that Vronsky notices im-

mediately within both of them. Through these three key factors in Tolstoy's description of Frou-Frou, the line is blurred between animal and woman, as both are examined, appraised, and value is placed on their appearance and bloodlines while they are objectified through the way they are described.

Even though appearance and traits are important to consider when buying a horse, their true value lies in what they are able to do, as a commodity, and the same goes for Emma, Edna, and Anna. Throughout the race, Vronsky makes loving comments to Frou-Frou, especially when she does something before she is ordered to. Not only was this expected of Frou-Frou but was expected of the three women as well. During the race, Vronsky takes the lead through Frou-Frou's efforts:

> His excitement, his joy and tenderness for Frou-Frou kept increasing. [...] She increased her speed and measuredly, exactly as he had supposed, soared up, pushing off from the ground and giving herself to the force of inertia, which carried her far beyond the ditch, and in the same rhythm, effortlessly, in the same step. Frou-Frou continued the race. [...] "Oh, my lovely!" he thought of Frou-Frou, listening to what was happening behind him. (Tolstoy 114-115)

The role of a racehorse is to be used to ride in races and be a form of entertainment for the man that owned it. Vronsky's love and affection is directly tied to how well Frou-Frou's performance unfolds as entertainment. Tolstoy uses the race as a way to comment about the ownership of women as commodities, with their value being tied to their performance in their roles as wives and as accessories used for entertainment.

This is glaringly apparent for Edna, as she was constantly verbally abused by her husband for not properly fulfilling her gender roles: "He reproached his wife with her inattention, her habitual neglect of the children. If it was not a mother's place to look after the children, who's on earth was it. [...] In short, Mrs. Pontellier was not a mother-woman" (Chopin 19-20). As a wife, Edna's primary job was to birth and rear children, activities commonly neglected, much to the chagrin of her husband. Mr. Pontellier abused Edna verbally, as a horse trainer would physically a horse, for not being able to perform a task as commanded. Not only did Edna neglect her duties at times as a mother, but she also shirked her responsibilities as a homemaker. Mr. Pontellier states, "she hasn't been associating with anyone. She's abandoned her Tuesdays at home, has thrown over all her acquaintances" (Chopin 50). This is Edna's responsibility as a commodity for entertainment. She must keep up the appearances of her husband and entertain not only him, but the guests who call upon her, which she also fails to do. Like the racehorse, competing for a podium finish, the men are competing with one another on whose wife performs the best at child rearing and hosting. This competition is seen in the assessment of Emma's performance:

> Emma knew how to manage her household. She would send the patients the statements for their consultations in well-phrased letters that did not sound like invoices. When, on Sunday, they had a neighbor to dinner, she would contrive to present a stylish dish, understood how to build a pyramid of greengages on some vine leaves, served little pots of preserves turned out on plates, and she even talked about buying mouth-rinsing bowls for the dessert course. All of this reflected a good deal of credit on Bovary. Charles came to respect himself more because he possessed such a wife. (Flaubert 44)

In the eyes of Charles, Emma is a perfect wife, as she went above and beyond her responsibilities. Charles was given more credit and respect as a man due to his 'possessing' of Emma, as he was seen as winning the unspoken competition. Due to Emma's beauty and performance as a wife, she was a very attractive and valuable commodity, drawing attention from men bent on possessing her as well.

Tolstoy, as a man, saw this reality in women considered second-rate citizens in male-dominated societies and owned for their charm, and he made a commentary on it by way of Dolly. For men it was very easy to obtain a commodity like a horse, and just as easily they could obtain a wife, and with the utmost ease were capable of replacing both. After Stepan's infidelity, Dolly questioned her value as a woman as she was replaced in the heart of her husband, telling Anna, "[y]ou see, she's young, she's beautiful . . . Do you understand, Anna, who took my youth and beauty from me? He and his children. I've done my service to him, and that service took my all, and now, naturally, he finds a fresh, vulgar creature more agreeable" (Tolstoy 55). Dolly performed as expected and did as she was told as an obedient and subservient wife. Rather than being rewarded for the effort she put into her family, she was retired like an aging horse, passed over for something more valuable in Stepan's eyes. Tolstoy continues to build on his metaphor throughout the horse race, commodifying women as obedient beings owned through marriage, only useful for child rearing and entertainment. Not only were the wives easily cheated on and conveniently replaced with younger and more beautiful women, but the same goes for the women that were used to cheat, leading to the last symbolism in Tolstoy's horse race metaphor.

Tolstoy's final key idea is represented in the metaphor the "breaking of the backs" (Tolstoy 115). This suggests that the women fall from the actions of the men that lead them on. At the last leg of the horse race, Frou-Frou refused to be controlled by Vronsky, and as she leaped over the final obstacle of the race,

> [s]he flew over it like a bird; but just then Vronsky felt to his horror that, having failed to keep up with the horse's movement, he, not knowing how himself, had made a wrong, an unforgivable movement as he lowered himself into the saddle. His position suddenly changed, and he knew that something terrible had happened. [...] Vronsky kicked her in the stomach with his heel and again started pulling at the reins. She did not move but, burying her nose

> in the ground, merely looked at her master with her speaking eye. The horse had broken her back and they decided to shoot her. (Tolstoy 115)

Through the guidance of their lovers, Emma, Edna, and Anna were taken down a similar path as Frou-Frou. They, too, were "ridden" for entertainment, jumping through hoops and avoiding all obstacles, only to be broken.

Beginning with Emma, Rodolphe tells himself, "[w]ith three pretty compliments, that one would adore me, I'm sure of it. [...] Yes, but how to get rid of the woman afterward" (Flaubert 91). While conspiring to bed Emma, Rodolphe was shamelessly planning to rid himself of her. After doing so, Emma became insatiable with the idealized life of the higher class, due to her being Rodolphe's mistress, borrowing money and selling herself in order to pay it back. After begging to Rodolphe for 8,000 Francs to pay her debt, he rejects her and in turn breaks what's left of her:

> She stood there lost in a daze, and no longer aware of herself except through the beating of her arteries, which she thought she heard escaping her like music that filled the countryside. [...] Madness was coming over her, she was afraid, and managed to get hold of herself again, though confusedly, it is true; for she did not remember the cause of her horrible condition, namely, the question of money. She was suffering only because of love, and felt her soul abandoning her through the memory of it, just as the wounded, in their last agony, feel life going out of them through their bleeding wounds. (Flaubert 189)

Emma foolishly believed that she was something more than a toy for Rodolphe. She loved him, did all she could to impress him, and cheated on her husband for him, and still she was tossed aside when no longer of use. Abandonment and loss of love was the pressure that broke Emma, causing her to descend into madness. This madness drove Emma to one conclusion, and after getting into the pharmacist's cupboards, she ate arsenic: "Withdrawing [her hand] full of a white powder, she began to eat it. [...] The she went home, suddenly at peace, and almost with the serenity of having done her duty" (Flaubert 190). In Emma's mind, the only suitable answer to show that she had some control over her life and was not rejecting the idea that she was simply a commodity to be used at one's leisure was to end her life.

Edna follows Frou-Frou and Emma's footsteps as well. After her affair with Arobin, a man that she also did not love, Robert, the one who awakened her sexuality returned and again abandoned her: "Robert was not waiting for her in the little parlor. He was nowhere at hand. The house was empty. But he had scrawled on a piece of paper that lay in the lamplight: I love you. Good-bye—because I love you" (Chopin 91). The man that she actually loved had abandoned her, the final straw that also broke Edna's back. Like Emma, the abandonment caused Edna to fall into madness and,

> [d]espondency had come upon her there in the wakeful night and had never

> lifted. There was no one thing in the world she desired. There was no human being whom she wanted near her except Robert; and she even realized that the day would come when he, too, and the thought of him would melt out of her existence, leaving her alone. (Chopin 92)

The despondency led Edna back to where her awakening took place, the Grand Isle. Like Emma, Edna took control of what little was left of her destiny and swam into the Gulf waters. With the memory of Robert and her childhood the last things on her mind, "[s]he looked into the distance, and the old terror flamed for an instant, then sank again" (Chopin 93).

Finally, Anna's descent into madness progressed throughout the novel as though she were possessed by a spirit due to her guilt, marital, and familial woes. Vronky's infidelity to Anna finally broke her. She thinks to herself, "[h]e loves another woman, that's clearer still . . . I want love and there is none. Which means it's all over . . . and I must end it" (Tolstoy 387). Anna was not abandoned by Vronsky: she simply misunderstood his silence. Vronsky avoided the impending fight with Anna, but that distance was enough to lead her down the same path as Emma and Edna, who were abandoned when they were seeking love as well. Following in Edna's steps, Anna goes to end her life where the spark of interest began with Vronsky, the Petersburg train station:

> And suddenly, remembering the man who was run over the day she first met Vronsky, she realized what she must do. [...] A feeling seized her, similar to what she experienced when preparing to go into the water for a swim. [...] And in that same instant she was horrified at what she was doing. "Where am I? What am I doing? Why?" She wanted to rise, to throw herself back, but something huge and implacable pushed at her head and dragged her over. "Lord forgive me for everything!" she said, feeling the impossibility of any struggle. (Tolstoy 392)

Like Frou-Frou, all three women were broken by the actions of the men who owned them, sending them on a descent into madness and a fall from grace. Where they differ from the horse, is that rather than being put to death, they took ownership of what was left of their destinies and chose to ending their own lives.

Tolstoy's brilliant metaphor of the horse race as it applies to Anna Karenina can also be used to describe Emma Bovary and Edna Pontellier as fallen women. The metaphor draws an implied connection between the inspection and appraisal of a race horse and the objectification of women by men who placed too much importance on their appearance, their pedigree, and the expressiveness of their eyes. The metaphor also highlights the commodification of women akin to horses being used for rearing children or entertainment. Lastly, the breaking of Frou-Frou's back and subsequent death all while under the control of Vronsky represents equally the breaking of three women by their own adulterous masters, leading the women to

take power over their lives in the only way they can: suicide.

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"Funny Witch:" The Villainization of Woman in *Call Me by Your Name*

Noel Lopez

Since the beginning of philosophical thought, women and nature have been associated with immorality. Genevieve Lloyd holds that the Pythagoreans viewed the world in terms of form and formlessness. Maleness was categorized under form and perceived as good, while femaleness was directly related to formlessness and perceived as bad or inferior (42). Through the introduction of feminist theory, and the laborious efforts of feminist critics, many of these perceived associations have been subverted and deconstructed; however, the remnants of these masculinist ideals continue to infiltrate the literary world and make their way into the undertones of written works and, subsequently, their audiovisual adaptations. Such is true of Luca Guadagnino's *Call Me by Your Name* (2017), adapted from the Andre Aciman 2008 novel of the same name, in which nature is analogous to woman and in opposition with culture or rational knowledge, which is related to men. Through the creation of this binary opposition, the film engenders a moral hierarchy of sorts, placing man and culture above woman and nature, so that when the former is no longer favored, the latter is villainized.

Within the first few minutes of the film, the power dynamic between man and woman is defined. "The usurper," Elio says, leaving Marzia as he runs to the window to get a look at Oliver (*Call Me by Your Name* 00:02:51). Although the nickname refers to Oliver's act of replacing last year's student, it prophesizes the role he would eventually play within Elio and Marzia's relationship, ultimately resulting in Marzia being replaced and left behind. This dynamic between both genders, and the entities with which they are associated, continues throughout the film, often interchanging woman with nature and man with culture as though their interchangeability were irrefutable. This association is one which has existed in western thought since its genesis. Lloyd writes:

> The pursuit of rational knowledge has been a major strand in western culture's definition of itself as opposed to Nature. It is for us in many ways equitable with Culture's transforming or transcending of Nature. Rational knowledge has been construed as a transcending, transformation or control of natural forces; and the feminine has been associated with what rational knowledge transcends, dominates, or simply leaves behind. (41)

This is perpetuated through the portrayal of women and men in the film; the women are tied to the earth—first shown through Annella's orchards and apricots—while the men are tied to their intellectual pursuits. The rigidity of this divide creates an

exclusivity for rational knowledge and the homosocial network that accompanies it. In one particular instance, the three men—Dr. Perlman, Elio, and Oliver—are engaged in conversation about Elio's possible sexual conquest over Marzia, a performative homosocial ritual, while Annella is gardening, hands deep in earth. When she interrupts them to question the topic of conversation, Perlman—understanding the exclusivity—relays the news of an archeological discovery, one which she is not invited to see (*Call Me by Your Name* 00:31:05-00:31:38), propounding her lack of the interest or intellectual capacity needed to participate.

The archeology trip within the film is incredibly significant when considering nature as a representation of woman and culture as a representation of man. The entire premise of an archeological dig is to remove the man from nature; it is to take back what nature has consumed, to rip apart the earth and find evidence of a man-made culture. So, when the statue of the male form was brought out of the lake, it was not simply a discovery, but a reclaiming and exaltation of maleness, one which not only excludes women, but rejoices in the separation from them—as depicted through the gleaming faces of the men watching it occur (*Call Me by Your Name* 00:35:45-00:36:12). And since the statue is a symbol of homosexual desire—described as such by both Oliver and Professor Perlman ("incredibly sensual"; "impossibly curved"; "daring you to desire them")—it also represents the removal of the reliance on women for libidinal fulfillment (*Call Me by Your Name* 01:11:13-01:12:24). Furthermore, the exclusion of Annella on this all-male outing allows for the immensely gleeful moment of homosocial interaction, free from the presence of women. When the men finish their duties, they are seen laughing and jumping around in the lake, a euphoric delight, reaching its climax when Oliver yells out Elio's name and Elio yells out his: a homosocial substitution for the act of heterosexual sex (*Call Me by Your Name* 00:36:29-00:36:37). This connection between homosocial and libidinal desire is one which transcends sexuality; it is a yearning which blurs the lines between the social and the erotic and suggests the presence of a carnal desire in men that cannot be fulfilled by a woman, irrespective of sexual orientation.

This is solidified through the lecture given to Elio by his father, in which Dr. Perlman speaks about his inability to have experienced a "beautiful friendship, maybe more than a friendship," like Elio experienced with Oliver, implying a homosocial or homoerotic one. Perlman admits to being envious of Elio because while he "may have come close, [he] never had what [Elio and Oliver] have. Something always held [him] back or stood in the way" (*Call Me by Your Name* 01:59:41-02:01:08). This sentiment and image mirror a scene during the archeological dig: as the men board the boat and sail out on the lake, they are blocked from the camera's view by a woman who is standing in the way (*Call Me by Your Name* 00:35:30-00:35:33). The static shot remains for a few seconds while the voice of Professor Perlman is heard, detached from his body, and the male homosocial group is invisible to the audience,

obstructed by the woman. Connecting these two images, one is able to understand more clearly the implications that Elio's father is making: the belief that women are the reason he was never able to explore a relationship with a man, be it platonic or romantic. The emptiness inside him, evinced by his admission of envy, is a perpetual fragmentation that his wife is unable to consummate. This not only suggests that man cannot be fulfilled by woman, but that it is woman who stands in the way of that fulfillment; she is in opposition to it, she becomes a villain.

This villainization of women is manifested in the way Elio talks about his mother, particularly after instances of intimacy with Oliver. For example, after the homosexual encounter with Oliver at the creek—the first time they kiss (*Call Me by Your Name* 00:56:18-00:57:13)—Elio sits with Oliver and reveals that the reason he does not wear the star of David necklace like Oliver—an act which symbolizes a further connection between the two, as shown through Elio's decision to wear it thereafter—is his mother. Elio then refers to Annella as a "funny witch," a phrase which has no allusive foundation prior to or after this encounter—the only other time witches are mentioned is when Oliver states that Anchise applied a "witch's brew" upon his wounds, an act that resulted in an infection needing pharmaceuticals to fix: the natural creating conflict only solvable by that obtained through rational knowledge (*Call Me by Your Name* 00:46:12; 00:57:30). The ambiguity of the phrase "funny witch" is significant when considering its phonetic similarity to the term "fucking bitch"; it proposes the former as an implicit vehicle for the negative feelings explicitly expressed by the latter (*Call Me by Your Name* 01:01:03-01:01:21). This negative perception of Annella by Elio continues after Elio and Oliver share another moment of homosexual intimacy, when Oliver massages and kisses Elio's feet (*Call Me by Your Name* 01:01:24-01:01:34). Elio physically lays atop the bodies of Marzia and Chiara, and calls his mother "a pain" (*Call Me by Your Name* 01:02:19), although she has not displayed any opposition to Elio hitherto. Elio's villainization of Annella is a result of her representing an obstruction thwarting homoerotic exploration, not as his mother, but as a woman in general.

The representation of female characters standing in for woman as a generalized abstraction, rather than their own individualized self, is continued up until the end of the movie when the previously depicted mechanism of man replacing woman is inverted. Oliver is replaced as a student by a female scholar. She has no name, no distinct characteristics, and when Dr. Perlman begins to reveal her area of specialization, the audio is muffled by the crackling sound of fire and her characteristics remain indistinguishable. The only clear reference to her as an individual is when Annella comments on her appearance, saying that "she looks a bit weak" (*Call Me by Your Name* 02:03:53 -02:04:13), placing her directly in opposition to Oliver, who is of a strong build, creating a hierarchy in which she is inferior. After being informed on his replacement, Oliver states, "speaking of she's," before announcing

his engagement to a woman. Again, the woman remains nameless and featureless, she has no individual thoughts or feelings; she is a blank woman whose individuality is nonexistent because she represents not herself, but women in general (*Call Me by Your Name* 02:05:33-02:06:01). Consequently, when she is opposed to Elio, who is a fully realized and sentient individual, she is viewed as the inferior choice, proposing Oliver's decision as an act of betrayal, as something immoral.

While the presumed intention of the film may not have been to present women and nature as inferior to men and culture, creating a distinctive binary and placing both groups in opposition to each other fathers a hierarchy through which one is viewed as superior to the other. Furthermore, attaching emotions to these groups—men and culture begetting happiness and freedom, women and nature begetting conflict and desolation—the film engenders an association with morality, with which one is deemed moral and the other deemed immoral. Through this mechanism, man is glorified, and woman is posed as the villain.

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Irie Jones and the Third Space in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*

Kali McCaa

First-generation immigrants know all too well the feeling of not belonging in a space. Samad and Alsana of Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, for example, who are Bangladeshi and most often identified as Indian, are are identified as Indian outcasts constantly excluded from the London to which they have emigrated, often because the English natives question their intelligence as though their accents signaled some sort of intellectual deficiency. Second-generation immigrants, like their parents before them, are familiar with this feeling of otherness, but they experience it in a most unique way. When it comes to the novel's Irie Jones, for example, not only is she a second-generation immigrant but she is of mixed race (Anglo and Afro-Jamaican) *and* a woman, a combination that lends itself to a set of struggles that fellow second-generation immigrants Magid and Millat, the male children of Samad and Alsana, do not have to battle with. Due to these three distinct features of Irie Jones, her struggles and development within the novel introduce a distinct perspective on the theme of otherness. Irie occupies what can be described as a "third space." She is not entirely Jamaican, nor is she entirely English. She is Jamaican-English: a hyphenated individual. As she occupies this third space, Irie struggles to both fit the Eurocentric ideals of London and value her Jamaican identity. As she attempts to forge her individuality, Irie digs into her family's past and desperately clings to her love for Millat in an attempt to create a space for herself where she feels accepted. In the end she realizes the fruitlessness of such a quest and instead learns how to accept herself in the third space she occupies.

The novel initially focuses on the physical features of Irie's mixed identity. The first chapter, which is told from her perspective, opens with her pondering the idea of losing weight and commenting on how she is built "all wrong" (Smith 224). This chapter reveals Irie's struggle with her body image as she battles the Eurocentric beauty standards of London at the time: "a slender, delicate thing not made for the hot sun" (Smith 222). In other words, a skinny, petite pale person, with long, straight fair hair and European facial features. Irie resents that she does not meet the European beauty standard. She is described as the complete opposite. At just fifteen years old she is "big …loaded with pineapples, mangoes, and guavas; . . . big tits, big butt, big hips, big thighs, big teeth. She was 182 pounds" (Smith 221). Irie inherited the Caribbean frame similar to Hortense's, her grandmother, and Ambrosia's, her great-grandmother. Despite knowing that the figure she was blessed with was bestowed by her Jamaican lineage, and despite her mother's attempts to console her, Irie still feels wrong. Because her mother was born with a slender figure and is

unable to understand Irie's struggles as a bigger woman, Irie develops a sense of otherness within her own family. Instead of believing her mother's words, she cannot help but feel "wrong" for how she was born, especially with the constant reminders "telling" her to lose weight, even for cash: "a small, handmade ad" invaded Irie's dreams, which said "LOSE WEIGHT TO EARN MONEY/ 081 555 6752. . . . She knew she was the targeted audience" (Smith 221). So Irie goes on to believe that "in her ugliness, . . . [s]he was all wrong" (Smith 224).

Due to this feeling of not only otherness but *wrongness*, Irie tries desperately to conform to the standards set before her. She goes to extreme lengths to alter her appearance, wearing breast-reducing bras and tummy-tucking underwear to shape her body. She begs for "dead straight" hair at the beauty parlor without taking any proper precautions because she wants straight hair as soon as possible, and as a result she ends up "head over the sink, [with] her hair, . . . coming out in clumps" (Smith 231). The relaxer she begged for ruined her hair, with its loose curls and brown streaks—a symbol of her hyphenated identity—to conform to a beauty standard that masquerades as something universally achievable. All of this is to impress the boy her heart desires, Millat, who, when she visits him, is "snogging" an "Eastern-bloc gymnast with a stomach like a washboard. Not unattractive, spectacular tits, but tight-assed as hell" (Smith 236). The very image she is trying to imitate, the very identity she is trying to conform to, is in bed with Millat, her first love. This is devastating for Irie. She sacrificed the hair on her head to fit a standard set not only by society, but also by Millat who, as shown by his multiple affairs with fit, white women, does not see Irie.

Despite her failed attempts to conform to Eurocentric beauty standards, Irie makes it her mission to belong in a social space. This desperation to belong is manifested through her love for Millat, who, though not white, seems to be a "social chameleon" of sorts. He fits in with the white kids, the Black kids, and the Asian kids, all while not fully "belonging" to any of the groups. Irie admires this quality, this "belonging nowhere that comes to people who belong everywhere. It was this soft underbelly that made [Millat]… most adored by Irie" (Smith 225). What Irie fails to realize is that Millat, as a man in a masculinist society, is more accepted in spaces which are not his own because he has a social right to these spaces. Irie is a woman, and beyond that she is a Black woman, a member of a group that has been historically denied access to and acceptance in multiple spaces. Irie does not see this significant difference between herself and Millat. She only sees Millat's ability to blend and belong.

This sense of belonging that Millat enjoys is not the only thing that Irie clings to. Their long "history" also keeps Irie lovesick—they have known each other since they were children. Irie knows who Millat is, not the facade he puts up around others. She believes she is "different" from the girls Millat "snogs" because she has

historical value in Millat's life. Irie adores "[t]hat they had history, that she was different in a good way" (Smith 225). As such, she heavily relies on Millat for a sense of identity for herself. She uses their history to convince herself that she belongs in his space, is a part of his life, and is "different" from the other girls in a "good way." Still, Millat rejects her advances. After this rejection she makes aggressive "love" to Magid, Millat's identical twin brother. Magid points out that Irie loves Millat "as if he were an island and [she] were shipwrecked and . . . could mark the land with an X" (Smith 382). In doing so Magid calls out Irie's dependence on Millat to form her identity; She uses him as her only evidence of a history and her only sense of belonging. Instead of Irie developing her own sense of identity and setting her own path, she relies on others to do so for her. Yet, as a person of mixed race, it is hard for Irie to develop an identity when she is constantly told she is "too Black," "too white," or "too English." When the world is telling Irie what she should be and how she should act, it is nearly impossible for her to form her own individual identity.

Irie has been pressured to conform to Eurocentric standards since she was a child, and as such, Irie develops an admiration for "Englishness." Her idolization of whiteness is apparent in the way she decorates her bedroom, which has become a "shrine" of Hollywood idols with green eyes (Smith 272). Even her mother worries about Irie's blind idolization, noticing "the gaggle of white friends who regularly trooped in and out of her bedroom" (Smith 272). Seeing this "ocean of pink skins surrounding her daughter," Clara is frightened that "the ride … would take her [Irie] away" (Smith 272). The ride does seem to take Irie away, as demonstrated not only by her desperate hair change, but also by her relationship with the Chalfen family. The Chalfens, a white family with a passion for science and a proclivity for racial microaggressions, agree to tutor Millat and Irie after school. The exclusionary behaviors of Joyce Chalfen, the mother, repeatedly make evident that the Chalfen family's aggressive whiteness is what allows them their position in society. Despite this Irie still feels that if she changes herself just enough, she can be just like them: She "want[s] to . . . merge with them. She want[s] their Englishness" (Smith 272). Irie hangs on to everything the Chalfens say, and even when not required to, she visits their household. Irie becomes secretary to Marcus Chalfen, the father, and eventually comes across a letter he wrote to Magid (the two developed a relationship as pen pals while Magid was in Bangladesh). In the letter, Marcus states that he believes Irie, unlike Magid, is unsuited to follow in his footsteps as a scientist: "she's a bright girl and she has the most tremendous breasts…. Sadly, I don't hold out much hope for her aspirations … so it might have to be dentistry for our Irie (she could fix her own teeth at least)" (Smith 305). Despite the backhanded remarks Marcus has made, not only about the physical appearance of her underage body but also about her intelligence, Irie, after a few tears, seems to simply accept the condemnation: "She just thought, right: dentistry. I'll be a dentist. Dentistry. Right" (Smith 306). Because

she admires the Chalfens and their Englishness, she accepts their word as fact because she hopes that she can reflect their whiteness by following their advice. Irie seems to want to forget her Jamaican ancestry and embrace her white side to align with the English society that surrounds her.

In addition to her obsession with Englishness, Irie becomes infatuated with her past when she flees to her grandmother Hortense's house after discovering her mother's secret: she has false teeth. At her grandmother's, Irie is united with her Jamaican heritage and traditional practices, such as bay rum to reduce fever. In Jamaica, Irie is separated from her parents, who deprived her of access to her familial history, and separated from Millat, whose childhood memories she relied on to make her own identity. Now she is with Hortense, who connects Irie to her Jamaican lineage with which she was separated from for so long. With the help of her grandmother, "[Irie] laid claim to the past—her version of the past—aggressively, as if retrieving misdirected mail" (Smith 331). This "misdirected mail" is her family history: her Black great-grandmother and white great-grandfather, Captain Charlie Dunham, and Ryan, who may be her biological father. When Irie returns to her home in England, she is no longer interested in the Chalfens' rants and their aggressive Englishness. The connection she made with her Jamaican ancestry has changed her.

Irie's visit with her grandmother proved to be vital in the development of her own identity. Tuning Joyce Chalfen out, Irie reflects on the way "Jamaica appeared to Irie as if it were newly made. . . . [w]here . . . a young white captain could meet a young black girl with no complications, both of them fresh and untainted and without past or dictated future—a place where things simply were" (Smith 332). Irie grows to appreciate the idea of a relationship or an identity belonging on its own without history, expectations, family, or friends all dictating how it should go. She longs for the simplicity of it. This development in Irie's thinking eventually leads to the realization that she can embrace an identity for herself without the constrictions of history, aggressive whiteness, European standards, or men who pay her no mind. Irie realizes that she does not have to make an identity or form a history out of what is presented to her, but can instead create something of her own. She realizes that "the particular magic of homeland . . . was that it sounded like a beginning. The beginningest of beginnings. Like the first morning of Eden and the day after apocalypse. A blank page" (Smith 332). It is a fresh start where Irie can form an identity for herself and accept the fact that she occupies a third space. It is a place where Irie can and will welcome her hyphenated identity instead of battling to be one or the other while being suppressed by Eurocentric values and beauty standards. She can embrace both.

Irie gets what is arguably the happiest of all endings. She has a child, and though the father is unknown (she slept with Magid and Millat on the same day and as twins they share the same exact DNA), Irie seems to prefer it that way: "Irie's

child can never be mapped exactly nor spoken of with any certainty" (Smith 437). This uncertainty, the concept of a clean slate where a person's identity is not defined by their roots, is a concept that heavily appeals to Irie. In fact, Irie fantasizes about such a world and looks forward to a time when roots will not matter, "because they're too long and they're too tortuous and they're just buried too damn deep" (Smith 437). This completely contrasts the Irie that the reader was presented with in the beginning, who longed to belong to something, to belong to a history, to be accepted in spaces which she may have not "belonged." That Irie is gone. She no longer aspires to reflect the Englishness she admired the Chalfens for, and she no longer clings to Millat either, who gave her the illusion of identity. Irie is forming her own identity separate from all. And the third space that she has been inhabiting? She is no longer trying to escape it. She is sitting in it on the beach in Jamaica with a white husband and her Jamaican grandmother. Her "fatherless little girl writes affectionate postcards to Bad Uncle Millat and Good Uncle Magid and feels free as Pinocchio, a puppet clipped of paternal strings" (Smith 448). Irie is giving her daughter the life she wished she had had, free of "paternal strings" and Eurocentric beauty standards. The two are occupying a Jamaican space where her daughter can be accepted if she is "loaded with pineapples, mangoes, and guavas..

After everything Irie has experienced, from the struggle to conform to Eurocentric beauty standards to the Chalfens' discrimination and abuse, she realizes that she can stop forcing herself into the spaces she was never meant to occupy. She learns to embrace her third space and accepts all that comes with being a second-generation female immigrant of Jamaican-English descent. She forms an identity of her own and then gifts her daughter with the life she wished she could have had. Irie's ability to embrace her hyphenated identity serves as a positive example for all mixed-race individuals who recognize their otherness and hope to accept the third space they occupy.

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Lessons on Love: The Lack of Education in *Woman Hollering Creek*

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While rich in tradition, culture, festivities, and much more, Mexican lifestyles are glaringly empty of proper social education when it comes to relationships for young women. The pervading lack of instruction on sexuality, romance, and love in Mexican households has a direct correlation to the ways different young women and girls proceed to express their feelings and identities later on; oftentimes, this disregard for education from their higher authorities, such as their parents or religious figures, will result in shame, failure, and rebellion. In Sandra Cisneros' collection of short stories, *Woman Hollering Creek*, a series of different experiences from the perspectives of teenage girls and young adult women make clear that women are left at a significant disadvantage. Cisneros' "One Holy Night" and "Woman Hollering Creek" in particular depict the misguided and yet scarcely talked-about expectations of love which consequently cause women to be in illicit, cruel, or abusive relationships. Meanwhile, "My Tocaya" highlights the opposite: a girl that chooses to break free from the standards expected of her accordingly faces disdain from the people that are meant to support her, particularly close family members and friends. In each of these three stories, women are socially taught to prioritize romance but especially purity above their own education, self-identity, and self-expression, and yet their communities not only do not openly speak about romance and the factors involved in it, but also deprecate these topics, thus reinforcing misogynistic and deeply harmful practices for the lives of young girls.

Shying away from discussions of sexuality in Mexican families is nothing unusual. Like many programs that one may be familiar with in the United States, Mexican culture often promotes an abstinence-only sex education program, along with a simple and underwhelming vocabulary that does not relay the full informative messages that it should. According to a study published in 2011, titled "Factors that influence communication about sexuality between parents and adolescents in the cultural context of Mexican families," this shy education format is not as beneficial as once thought; on the contrary, research shows that openly talking about sex, love, and all other related topics, is more conducive to the children's safe sex practices later in life than not (Rouvier et al. 176). The paper also provides important background for the stories in Cisneros' *Woman Hollering Creek* collection, especially in regards to the dominant institutions, such as the Catholic Church, that have created the very situations that women find themselves in—usually rife with violence, excessive sheltering, and consequent naiveté. The religious faith common in almost all

Mexican families generates an undeniable domination of the principles supported by Catholicism, including the standard of heterosexuality in relationships and an opposition to academic discourse regarding sexuality in school lessons (Rouvier et al. 176). While it is understandable that parents find themselves concerned with the morality of such open discussions and the risks they may unwittingly be exposing their children to, ignoring the conversations actually creates even more risk. By involving both parents and children in comprehensive sex education, situations like those presented in Cisneros' stories—secret or toxic relationships as well as unwanted pregnancies—can be evaded, and as such, a solution is formed: "Would it not be possible to offer the parents updated information that would help them to overcome the barrier placed by Christian morality that inhibits genuine and simple communication? Would it not be possible to thus enhance the delivery of relevant and timely prevention messages that would have a positive impact on the adolescents' sexual health?" (Rouvier et al. 188). The essay declares that Mexican households should refrain from simply pulling their children away from conversations of sex; they should in fact be capable of broaching subjects of sexual health to them beyond the concept of abstinence and into proper sexual safety. Such a conversation would undoubtedly be beneficial to an overall expansion that would cover broad themes of romance and love as well, and contribute to help fix the power imbalance that exists between Mexican men and women in relationships.

"One Holy Night" is a primary example from Cisneros' works that demonstrates why an education like that promoted by Rouvier is beneficial. In the story, a young woman living in a sheltered Mexican family is indirectly left more susceptible to the manipulations of an older man, with whom she engages romantically and sexually without her family knowing. While expected to work and help support her family at the young age of thirteen, the conservative customs typical of an ethnic minority group—particularly as part of the Mexican community—keep her in the dark about both love and sex. These topics are highly sensitive and kept secret; involvement in them without parental or societal approval is extremely taboo. As a result, Ixchel, as the young girl is dubbed by her partner, is put at a notable disadvantage because of her society's unwillingness to have honest and meaningful conversations. Despite this, Ixchel considers herself to finally be allowed in on a forbidden knowledge after having sex for the first time: "I know I was supposed to feel ashamed, but I wasn't ashamed. I wanted to stand on top of the highest building, the top-top floor, and yell, *I know*" (Cisneros 30, emphasis in original). She feels confident in having achieved a new stage of her womanhood that gives her a certain wisdom over other women, and yet she actually knows very little of what constitutes a healthy, loving union. After discovering her hidden romance, her grandmother and Uncle Lalo struggle to place the blame on something: while the former opts to disdain men and their wickedness, the latter places it on the values of the foreign country they've

moved to: the United States. Both fail to acknowledge how their own secretive and restrictive lessons on love have dwarfed Ixchel's maturity and impacted her life. There have been no teachings on what she should have expected from sex (or how to practice it safely, as she ends up pregnant), or what makes up a good partner and bond. In Jeff Thomson's words, after the blame has been distributed to everyone applicable, there is one final result: "Women are left to bear the children and the shame" (419). Responsibility and accountability, even after the accusations made by Ixchel's grandmother and uncle, will unfortunately end up only on Ixchel herself, as she now must weather the consequences of teen pregnancy and motherhood at only thirteen years old. It is not simply exotic American values, immorality, and the sins of men, or even her own obliviousness that dooms Ixchel, but the institutions and practices that have led her to that state of ignorance where she cannot properly protect herself from the bad sides of romantic affairs.

Similarly, Cleófilas, in the story "Woman Hollering Creek," having had no parental influence to guide her through any explorations, formulates her own perceptions of love from Mexican *telenovelas*, which can present very toxic double standards for both men and women to adhere to. Jean Wyatt writes, "The telenovelas glamorize pain as a necessary part of love, so that Cleófilas and her friends in Mexico adopt the idea of suffering and make it part of their life plans" (255). Wyatt effectively helps highlight the helpless circumstances that have been created for women, and remarkably asserts that "the pains of love can be physical as well as emotional" (255), both of which the *telenovelas* have readily prepared Mexican women for. Without the right guidance from family members or authority figures, Cleófilas grows to have unrealistic expectations for her marriage to Juan Pedro, particularly in what she expects from her own self and her actions; everything she knows about love has been garnered from melodramatic television couples, and it sets the tone for her future. Cisneros draws parallels between Cleófilas and the *telenovelas*, writing, "[t]he beautiful Lucía Méndez having to put up with all kinds of hardships of the heart, separation and betrayal, and loving, always loving no matter what, because *that* is the most important thing…" (44, emphasis in original). This message is something that sticks with Cleófilas for a long time. Although her husband is abusive and severely mistreats her, Cleófilas often overlooks his faults: "This is the man I have waited my whole life for […] this man, this father, this rival, this keeper, this lord, this master, this husband till kingdom come" (Cisneros 49). Her husband has grown to dominate every portion of her life; the restrictions placed on her as a married Mexican woman cause her to subjugate her personality and even shrink under her husband's influence because she knows that traditionally, her duties, which include unflinching loyalty, lie at his side.

Despite previously being confident that she would never stand for a man's domestic violence, Cleófilas does not speak up about his abuse until the very end of

the story, and in fact even makes excuses for his behavior. Alongside this, she also makes several comparisons of her husband to the fictional men of her television shows, making it clear that even with the excuses that she forces herself to create for Juan Pedro, she still knows her situation is not ideal for what a woman should have to face in a marital relationship. For example, Cleófilas laments that he is not as physically attractive, or as well-mannered, romantic, or even helpful as the famous men on her screen—Juan Pedro does not help around the house or with their son, and demands that she clean up after him and take care of him like his mother once did. Cleófilas desires a grander, love-filled romance equal to that of Lucía Méndez in *Tú o Nadie*, but it is ultimately her own community that holds her back from escaping his abuse and finding her personal happiness. When she first contemplates leaving and going home to her father and brothers in Mexico, Cleófilas is more than aware of the shame she would bring upon herself for divorcing her husband and raising her two children single-handedly. The society she is a part of is not one willing to support her, for it would be expected of her to remain with her husband and maintain a proper family image even if it means concealing his assault. Society's prospects for Mexican-American women lock them into cycles of danger, abuse, and unhappiness without teaching them how to escape such situations on their own.

The sheltered Mexican society has deep effects on the women that adhere to its expectations, but also on those that break free of them. "My Tocaya" features a young girl of thirteen that does not fit in with the other girls her age. Trish, as she asks everyone to call her, is viewed unkindly by those around her and is relentlessly criticized for not embodying the ideals of what a teen Mexican girl should look like, including those of the narrator. The narrator comments, "A girl who wore rhinestone earrings and glitter high heels to school was destined for trouble that nobody—not God or correctional institutions—could mend" (Cisneros 36-37). Trish makes the decision to run away, but it is important to note that her family is fractured far before she does so, and it is this brokenness that inspires her to set herself apart from her community. Trish is able to recognize its unreliability when it comes to sustaining its people, and wishes to go elsewhere where she will be appropriately cared for, respected, and treasured without having to change who she is to be accepted: "Staying home left her no options, while running exposed her to multiple dangers; the options for women are limited at best, and almost nonexistent in this situation" (Thomson 419). Regardless, society, including the Catholic Church as an establishment, bullies Trish for her forms of self-expression and does nothing to help fix the family that has been destroyed by the very expectations they set in place. Their negligence and lack of proper education leads women to make their own personal explorations and journeys away from tradition. The narrator, for instance, who is very much a part of the judgmental world that Trish fights against, inadvertently addresses her community's issues: "[She disappeared] from a life sentence at that taco house. Got

tired of coming home stinking of crispy tacos. Well, no wonder she left […] Who knows what she had to put up with. Maybe her father beat her. He beat the brother, I know that" (Cisneros 37). This form of self-determination and so-called rebellion is upsetting to them, but such attitudes are contradictory and hypocritical. Not only have they ignored the father's abuse, but by controlling women's personalities and curbing creativity in the first place, the Mexican community around Trish has made themselves responsible for the very behaviors they condemn, and ultimately only succeed in failing women instead of giving them the access to resources that would truly give them the best lives possible.

Frequently, as is demonstrated by some of the stories in *Woman Hollering Creek*, women have no choice but to remain in the very systems of oppression that damage them due to a lack of options. Very rarely do they manage to successfully distance themselves from the groups that have hurt them, and more often than not will grow to become part of the system themselves. María Herrera-Sobek writes on this topic: "In this process of engendering, fabricating, that is, making a gender, the end result is a hole and absence: women as invisible, voiceless, worthless, devalued objects [...], women are socialized into being participants in their own oppression" (247). Furthermore, even when the chance to escape is available for some women, doing so is incredibly difficult, as society is structured in a way that requires them to rely on men both economically and socially, evident in Cleófilas' hesitations to leave her husband. The stories Cisneros provides are "emblematic of a social structure that allows little cultural movement and less possibility for the formation of an identity outside the boundaries of the barrio" (Thomson 418). Meanwhile, other women will contribute to the secretiveness surrounding sex and romance that keeps them rigidly in place. This is described as a silence in two senses: "*silence* in not denouncing the 'real' facts of life about sex and its negative aspects in violent sexual encounters, and *complicity* in embroidering a fairy-tale-like mist around sex, and romanticizing and idealizing unrealistic sexual relations" (Herrera-Sobek 252, emphasis in original). In particular, silence and complicity are connected to both "One Holy Night" and "Woman Hollering Creek". Whereas in the former story Ixchel is disappointed by her guardians who fail to teach her about the potential dangers she may face as a young woman experiencing her sexuality for the first time, the latter story features Cleófilas as she is encouraged to harbor unreliable expectations for love, marriage, and identity.

Cisneros' overall works are an evident challenge to the long-held expectations and community standards for Mexican-American women. Not only does she protest against them, but she paints situations where women have a hopeful, if small, opportunity to reform what they have been taught in one way or another. In a piece analyzing several of Cisneros' stories, Russell Breshears states, "Cisneros dares to believe that literature can help change the world, can call attention to the plight

of the poor, and can even take on machismo" (2). He goes on to say that Cisneros "gives a voice to the Chicana and to all women who have been silenced by machismo in the past" (Breshears 10). Regardless of the somber and solemn themes that infuse Cisneros' literature at times, it is undoubtedly true that she presents an interesting viewpoint on the ways in which Mexican women build and cope with their individuality in their diverse communities controlled by the patriarchy. Thomson would agree; *Woman Hollering Creek* is a call to bridge the gap that sets women apart from independence, and to fully enable the emergence of powerful identities.

In shying away from the topics of sex, romance, and self-determination, society negatively alters women's chances to succeed in life. While Mexican communities believe that their traditional roles and conservative ethics are what set women up for success, they actually only accomplish the opposite. As seen through some of Cisneros' short stories in *Woman Hollering Creek*, such as "One Holy Night", "Woman Hollering Creek", and "My Tocaya", the role models that women had in the 90s were not sufficient to indicate to them what their lives should be like regarding various factors. Self-identity, self-care, romance, and sex were not discussed enough. Regardless, Cisneros' literary contributions ensure that the conversation is opened to women from multiple communities, allowing them to speak up and grow past once-limiting traditions.

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Deconstructing Archetypes in *Hamlet* from a Queer Theorist Perspective

Frankie Nadal

There is no doubt that William Shakespeare is, quite possibly, the most influential and prolific English writer of his era, if not of all time. While this tidbit may not be surprising or intensely debated, it cannot be denied that one of Shakespeare's most notable works is *Hamlet*. Spawning countless adaptations over the centuries, intentionally or otherwise, *Hamlet* has become the central focus of many analyses and interpretations that work to capitalize on every nuance and insight and sense from the text. One facet of *Hamlet* that is of great interest is the use of archetypes, which Wilfred Guerin et al. define as "a model of a person, ideal example, or a prototype after which others are copied, patterned, or emulated, or a symbol recognized across cultures" (414). Employing a deconstructionist approach, as established by Jacques Derrida and cited by Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory*, the Hero archetype that *Hamlet* embodies can be broken down to reveal the ways in which he embodies multiple, conflicting archetypes. Additionally, this disunity can further be examined through the lens of Queer theory, as Hamlet's characterizations through such contradictions contain an inherent queerness that are best approached with Eve K. Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*, which explores how the suppression of one's identity shapes one's interactions and beliefs.

Referencing Derrida, Barry notes what it is, precisely, that post-structuralists do, emphasizing how post-structuralists "read the text against itself" and actively seek out paradoxes and contradictions in the text to show the disunity of it, occasionally intensely focusing on a single passage (75-6). Additionally, deconstruction occurs in three parts, each concerned with a different aspect of the text. The "*verbal*" is concerned with individual lines and phrases, the "*textual*" looks at the overall scene, poem, or work (76-7), and the "*linguistic*" takes note of language itself (78).

Beginning with the *verbal*, several lines in Act 2, Scene 2 that reveal the disunity in Hamlet's characterization which leads him to fulfill three different, contradictory archetypal roles. For example, when conversing with Polonius, Hamlet is defined as being mad, yet still methodical and sensible (Shakespeare, 2.2.202-3). These two lines already showcase a contradiction in the text, as someone cannot be both mad and sensible. Further, Polonius remarks, receptively for once, "[h]ow pregnant sometimes his replies are—a happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not prosperously be delivered of" (Shakespeare, 2.2.205-8). Polonius reaffirms that Hamlet is mad, and regardless of whether this is true or an act, he also sees wisdom and unconventional intelligence in his response. It is here that Hamlet's characterization shifts from the Hero to the Jester, an archetype

defined by its nonsensical, if not self-depreciating, wit, which is starkly contrasted with their wisdom and ability to reveal hypocrisy. By its nature, the Jester is a conundrum, and this conundrum is further revealed at the *textual* level.

As established, Hamlet is the protagonist of the play, serving as the Hero and seeking truth and justice by confronting King Claudius about the murder of his brother, Hamlet's father and former king of Denmark. However, Hamlet intends to uproot this injustice by feigning madness in an attempt to deceive and kill the King who is in direct opposition to the traditional moral values of the Hero archetype. This is where Hamlet's portrayal is more akin to either the archetype of the Revenger or the Anti-hero, characterizations more concerned with their end goal than the means to achieve said goal. Examining Act 2, Scene 2 in its entirety, we observe Hamlet's probing intelligence and deviousness as he resorts to a clever trick to prove King Claudius for the murderer he believes him to be, while simultaneously reflecting on his person. Firstly, Hamlet ably deciphers and unveils that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern plan to spy on him, and while this is a remarkable show of awareness, it contradicts Polonius' earlier assessment of his madness (Shakespeare 2.2.242-5).

Secondly, Hamlet's entire conversation with the acting troupe further proves this. Hamlet not only recites a portion of a speech with such aplomb that Polonius praises his delivery; he also instructs the troupe to deliver it once more later (Shakespeare 2.2.374-91;446-7). The content of this speech revolves around Pyrrus, the Greek hero who avenges his father Achilles's death, and it is this context that unveils Hamlet's plot. By having the actors recite this speech, Hamlet would cleverly expose the hypocrisy of the court, despite his feigned madness, and this cements his archetyping as the Jester, which undermines his previously established Hero archetype—an archetype that would have directly confronted the King of this injustice.

Lastly, in the soliloquy that marks the end of this scene, Hamlet laments his inability to confront King Claudius; however, he soon turns about. After recognizing that he is physically incapable of confronting and enacting the vengeance he swore to, Hamlet plots to have the acting troupe perform in front of King Claudius a scene in which the jealous brother of a king kills said king and assumes his crown and his wife (Shakespeare 2.2.515-26). It is here that Hamlet counters the behavior associated with the archetype of the Hero, instead utilizing underhanded and manipulative methods to attain the results he desires, and not necessarily the truth—a key component of the Anti-hero or Revenger. However, this proclamation also contradicts the embodiment of the Jester, as the preceding lines to his plan in this same soliloquy establish a traditional "man versus self" conflict, which is crucial to the growth expected in the archetype of the Hero. (Shakespeare 2.2.487-515).

As for the *linguistic*, there is not much to say that has not already been discussed in the *verbal* and *textual* analyses. Hamlet is, at his core, a character rife with conflict. Perhaps, then, the most intriguing aspect of this whole is not revealed with

a *linguistic* analysis, but with a queer theorist approach. To do this, however, it first needs to be established that Hamlet, and perhaps even Shakespeare, are queer, either implicitly or explicitly so. Stanley Wells, a renowned Shakespeare scholar, has dedicated multiple major publications to the exploration of sex and sexuality in Shakespeare's works, including *Looking for Sex in Shakespeare*. In his book, Wells considers whether the sexual innuendo often present in Shakespeare's works is merely due to interpretations by the public or indicative of Shakespeare's own queerness. Wells posits that Shakespeare is, in fact, queer through a thorough analysis of various productions and interpretations of Shakespeare's works, focusing particularly on the number of sonnets Shakespeare penned addressed to a male interest. Having established a canon of queer authorship, as queer theory aims to do, *Hamlet* can be read through this lens of queerness, bringing new meaning to the deconstructive reading of Act 2, Scene 2 (Barry 150).

After all, Hamlet's internal and external conflicts revolve around his inability to act, despite having every reason to do so, and much of the criticism of this fact is aimed at himself. This internalization of his own inadequacies and indecision mirrors those of queer or questioning people who are in the closet. In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve K. Sedwick defines the metaphorical closet as an essential "shaping presence" that influences every action and decision made by a queer person, whether they be openly out or not (Sedgwick 68). As revealed in the deconstruction of Hamlet's archetyping, there is something about Hamlet that prevents him from being a true Hero, resulting in his fractured character. Hamlet compares himself to the actor whom he requested give the speech about Pyrrhus, remarking how this actor, with no driving force behind his performance, "[c]ould force his soul so to his own conceit … Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect, a broken voice, and his whole function suiting with forms to his conceit? And all for nothing" (Shakespeare 2.2.474-9). Yet, Hamlet, who is "prompted to [his] revenge by heaven and hell," cannot do so, cannot fathom why he cannot do so (Shakespeare 2.2.505). With the definition of the closet provided by Sedgwick, it can be inferred that this is precisely why Hamlet cannot act. He presents himself as being driven mad by grief, similar to how a queer man presents himself as heterosexual, and he begins to lose his identity as he realizes he fooled himself into believing he is mad—much like how queer folk experience dysphoria and begin to internalize biases and bigotry against them. Furthermore, Hamlet's comparison between himself and the actor can also be read through a queer lens. Hamlet wishes to be more like the actor, who is able to act and devote himself so completely to his craft, but criticizes himself for not being able to, despite having a better reason to (Shakespeare 2.2). Similarly, queer folk often compare themselves to heterosexual figures and question and berate themselves for not being able to openly express themselves as they do.

Ultimately, Hamlet's inability to commit to a course of action, his self-depreciating nature, and his complex characterization all lend themselves to queer analogies and projections. Whether intentional or not, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* presents its titular protagonist as queer. Additionally, this queer interpretation is further underscored by the applications of Derrida's deconstruction, particularly when analyzing the paradoxes revealed by the verbal and textual stages of deconstruction. Regardless, *Hamlet* is a masterpiece in storytelling, and Shakespeare cements his legacy as a timeless, possibly queer, author and playwright.

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Magic Realism: The Literary Bridge to Understanding Cultural Identity

Jocelyne Ordonez

In a foundational interpretation of magic realism as postcolonial discourse in the literature of English-speaking Canada, Stephen Slemon describes magic realism as a "sustained opposition" between reality and fantasy, never fully embracing a singular "narrative mode" (410). Ernesto Quiñonez's *Taína* exemplifies an element of this dual strand as the narrator, Julio, dwells on the harsh socio-economic conditions of Spanish Harlem. Still, his yearning to experience love drives him to create a second strand, the fantastic, through his fictionalized version of Taína and her "mysterious" pregnancy. Quiñonez sustains the balance between the two, reality and fantasy, to mirror the postcolonial suspension of Taíno culture and the Latinx identity in the United States. Julio Comiñares's Latinx identity and that of his neighbors in Spanish Harlem do not fully embody Taíno or Western culture, thus creating a cultural and generational divide among their community. Magic realism is the novel's driving force that Quiñonez uses to propel readers to understand the postcolonial effects on the cultural identity of Julio's community in Spanish Harlem.

Julio's Spanish Harlem is a world of both struggle and wonder where the essence of Taíno culture still lives within the community that fights for a better future. Quiñonez centers the story around the poor neighborhood of Spanish Harlem not to perpetuate negative stereotypes of the Latinx community but to solidify a literary representation of their cultural experience. Magic realism provides a foundation for authors like Quiñonez to avoid "writing from the perspective of the privileged centers of [Western] literature" but instead to give a voice to ethnic minorities who lack representation in the American literary canon (D'haen 195). Quiñonez emphasizes socio-economic concerns like low educational achievement, poverty, and access to proper housing in America. Julio describes the gentrification process in his neighborhood as developers build new "cheaply made rentals" that only "white young professionals can afford"(Quiñonez 85). Quiñonez's realistic rendition of gentrification highlights how the economic and social status of the people in Julio's Spanish Harlem are strikingly different from the young professionals moving into their neighborhood. Developers design their projects with an eye to a wealthy demographic, thus causing rent prices to rise in poor neighborhoods, and people like Julio cannot afford to pay their rent. Addressing social issues like gentrification maintains the balance between the reality and fantasy of Spanish Harlem. During a class visit to The Museum of the American Indian in New York, Ms. Cahill, Julio's teacher, consistently repeats to her students, "you might want to write about that for your college essay," but the students ignore her (Quiñonez 54). Quiñonez creates a

vivid picture of disillusioned students who have the potential to be successful but lack the resources or the self-esteem to achieve their goals. However, Julio does not ponder his educational disadvantage, for he is a very promising student academically; instead, Julio reverts to thinking about Taína's voice and wonders, "who had Ms. Cahill seen?" when Taína sang, "who did she love?" (Quiñonez 53). Thus, Julio's socio-economic issues never trouble him as he holds on to the hope and desire to experience love through Taína's voice.

Quiñonez includes a deeply spiritual side to the story through the characterization of Peta Ponce, an "*espiritista*," a woman who communicates with spirits; however, he does not include her belief system as escapism. Instead, Peta Ponce embodies the fantastical aspect of magic realism that guides readers to confront their reality and "untangle [. . .] what is mysterious in things, in life, in human acts" (Leal 121). At first, Julio tries to make sense of the world around him and is reluctant to believe in the spiritualist methods of Peta Ponce. He only abides by her instructions for the sake of Taína and her mother. However, it is through Peta Ponce's spiritual guidance that Julio begins to make sense of the world around him: "And for the first time that night, her eyes found mine, and [Peta] said that it is easier to build good children than to fix broken adults. And I understood her" (Quiñonez 255). Julio understood how his ancestors' experience of colonization consequently stifled the spiritual heritage of generations past, but Taína's daughter, Usmaíl, represents a new generation, the reclaiming of their indigenous cultural identity. Within the genre of magic realism, Quiñonez has no "need to justify the mystery of events" (Leal 123); therefore, readers readily accept the "reality" that Taína's mysterious pregnancy produced a child that was born to start a revolution (Quiñonez 43).

Throughout the novel, characters experience exaggerated versions of realistic scenarios to maintain a balance between the "ordinary" and the "extraordinary" (Mikics 372). Julio's determination to hear Taína sing comes from his desire to "hear love" and "see" who loves him back (Quiñonez 5). His desire to love and to feel loved is seemingly ordinary. However, Julio's love for Taína and his fictionalized version of her is juxtaposed with the reality of her vulgar language and dismissive attitude towards him. Thus, his unwavering love for a rude girl who does not love him back becomes extraordinary. Taína's talent for singing also appears like an ordinary talent, but the belief that people can "feel their loved ones, smell their scents" when she sings elevates her singing, like Julio's love, to the status of extraordinary (Quiñonez 5).

The captivating ending of the novel embodies the essence of magic realism as fantasy and reality remain in balance. Julio finally hears Taína sing and sees who loves him, "but it was not Taína"; whom he saw was his mother (Quiñonez 259). Quiñonez emphasizes that Julio saw his parents' dreams "trampled" and "unfinished" and that their hands were "calloused from the stones they had pushed" (259).

The primitive image of Julio's parents pushing a stone creates a metaphorical representation of past colonized people who fought for their dreams against the weight of oppression. As Taína continues singing, Quiñonez maintains readers in a "dream-like suspension," offering a "hypnotic renewing of everyday existence," as Julio describes the abolishment of mundane problems: "no one had credit card debt," "rents to pay," "ills or imperfections" and "everyone built a ladder to the stars," "everyone had been forgiven" (Mikics 372; Quiñonez 262).

Taína is a novel that fully embraces the complexities of and the oxymoron in the term magic realism as the suspension between the fantastic and the real creates Julio's excentric world of Spanish Harlem. Quiñonez accurately conforms to Slemon's magic realism strategy of "sustained opposition" while masterfully crafting a deeper understanding of the neo Taíno culture and the rebirth of a new identity. In the euphoric scene that closes the story of Spanish Harlem, Taína's voice becomes the bridge that joins everyone inside Carlito's Café, and magic realism is the bridge that closes the gap between cultural divides.

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Everything Else Inside

Megan Rhoades

The country of Haiti has a history marked by upheavals in poverty, natural disaster, despotic presidents, rape, and violence that created the distinct culture of its people. However, with no historical context, the image of present-day Haiti portrayed in 24-hour news outlets and social media "exacerbates our inability to see the past or the future" (Svistova and Pyles 27), leaving gaps in the narrative of the Haitian people and creating a single narrative of stereotypical victimhood. In her 2014 Ted Talk, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie explores this phenomenon in the context of her native Nigeria. She calls it "the danger of a single story" (00:00:21). Svistova and Pyles would agree that single story accounts are dangerous insofar as they allow for the fabrication of new and harmful narratives. They posit that single descriptor narratives "almost always fail to contextualize" that which is necessary to form a complete picture (34). The result is a narrative of an entire people based on stereotypes.

Haitian-American author Edwidge Danticat resists "the danger of a single story" in her book *Everything Inside: Stories* (2019), a collection of short stories that brings to light the depth of Haitian history and culture and the complexity and diversity of the effects both have had on the past, present, and future of the individual. Using symbolism, irony, and dual perspectives and flashbacks, Danticat creates eight stories that underscore the balance of universal and particular issues that unveils the gaps in the existing Haitian narrative and provides insights into the lives of individuals from all walks of life in a country that international audiences can understand and empathize with. In this manner, Danticat counters the representation of Haiti as a country created and recreated as vulnerable.

The characters in "Dosas", for example, demonstrate some of the particulars of the Haitian diaspora in Miami, Florida. The plot of the story moves back and forth between Elsie's present situation and the times when her ex-husband Blaise and Olivia–for whom Blaise left Elsie–frequent "Dede's Night Club in Little Haiti" to listen to a "kompa band" (9). However, Elsie's continued love for and infatuation with Blaise and her true concern for Olivia's safety upon her return to Haiti, which led her to be tricked out of most her life savings, are universal, along with Elsie's saving and Blaise's need for making more money. Working as a home nurse's assistant, Elsie knows that "the disease you ignore is the one that kills you" (12), yet she is blind to the signs of Blaise's imminent betrayal and the signs of the "plot to trick [her] out of [her] money" (12). She is blinded by her love and care for both Olivia and Blaise, a circumstance that is common among many people.

Danticat continues to close the emotional distance between her characters and her readers in “In the Old Days.” The story is told by Nadia, whose father, Maurice, returned to Haiti, leaving her pregnant mother in Brooklyn, New York, after a “thirty-year father-son” dictatorship had ended,” a somewhat veiled reference to the dictatorship of the Duvaliers, "Papa Doc" and "Baby Doc" (43). Maurice’s dying wish is to see Nadia. His wife, “Mother Earth,” also returned to Haiti to try and restore “the justice system” that was corrupted by “repressive laws from the French Napoleonic Code and those passed down from the dictatorship” (50). This story not only addresses specifics of Haiti’s political and historical past, but also hints at cultural traditions of mourning specific to Haiti. However, Nadia’s experience as a casualty of a broken marriage of the Haitian diaspora, and with a dying father are nearly universal. Similarly, Carol in the story “Sunrise, Sunset” is losing her mental health. She had been born and raised in Haiti, but she raised her children in the United States. Carol has experienced many of the tragedies of Haiti’s past, which she refers to as the "terrible things" she experienced in her youth (140). Her loss of health and concern for her daughter, Jeanne, along with Jeanne’s post-partum depression, are fairy typical concerns, yet the stories she will leave untold due to her declining cognitive ability are particular to Haiti, each eliciting empathy and understanding from the reader.

Similarly, “The Gift” provides the reader with context for the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, not just for the devastating effects of the natural disaster on infrastructure, but on the people. Svistova and Pyles explain “that the image of disaster is constructed through other frames that have been previously circulated, such as extreme poverty or weak governmental institutions” (xv). Danticat uses flashbacks to (re)define the perceived reality of Haitian survivors. Thomas’s individual past and present experiences belie the stereotypical “frame” or “single story” that reduces Haitians to victims of the 2010 disaster. Anika narrates flashbacks of Thomas, “the dapper man she once loved” whom she met “at his real estate office, a penthouse suite overlooking downtown Miami” (83). Moreover, the dramatically changed relationship between Anika and Thomas demonstrates that the effects the disaster had on the Haitian people are common issues. Thomas was a hurt man, emotionally and mentally after the death of his wife and child, and Anika loved him. Outside of the affair, Anika and Thomas are people with complex lives, emotions, and experiences. Love and loss are issues that every reader can empathize with.

Finally, “Without Inspection,” the last story in the collection, ties the universal concerns of each of the stories together, into arguably the ultimate universal issue, fate. Danticat personifies the “wrathful hand” (202) that either loosened or broke Arnold’s safety harness, leading to the death of this undocumented immigrant in a construction site. Arnold dies after his partner Darline saves him on the shore after immigrating from Haiti by boat to the U.S. Darline’s first husband died trying

to swim to shore. Arnold breaks with the stereotypes of the "angry, criminal immigrants" that come over to America by boat. He finds love and leads a life of hard work and contentment with Darline and their son. He is not a victim of his traumatic childhood as a *restavek* in Haiti.

None of the characters in the stories in *Everything Inside* is a victim of their culture. Elsie is a caretaker with a profitable job; Carol and Jeanne are mothers and daughters with respectable families dealing with the onset of life changes; Anika and Thomas are lovers caught in the end of their relationship. Danticat breaks the stereotype of Haitians as victims of constant tragedy not only by providing contexts but by creating multiple narrative lines that balance the universal and issues particular to Haiti. The use of forward-and-backward narration demonstrates that each character has a complicated and emotional past, but the present and the future elicit a relatable, empathic response from international audiences.

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