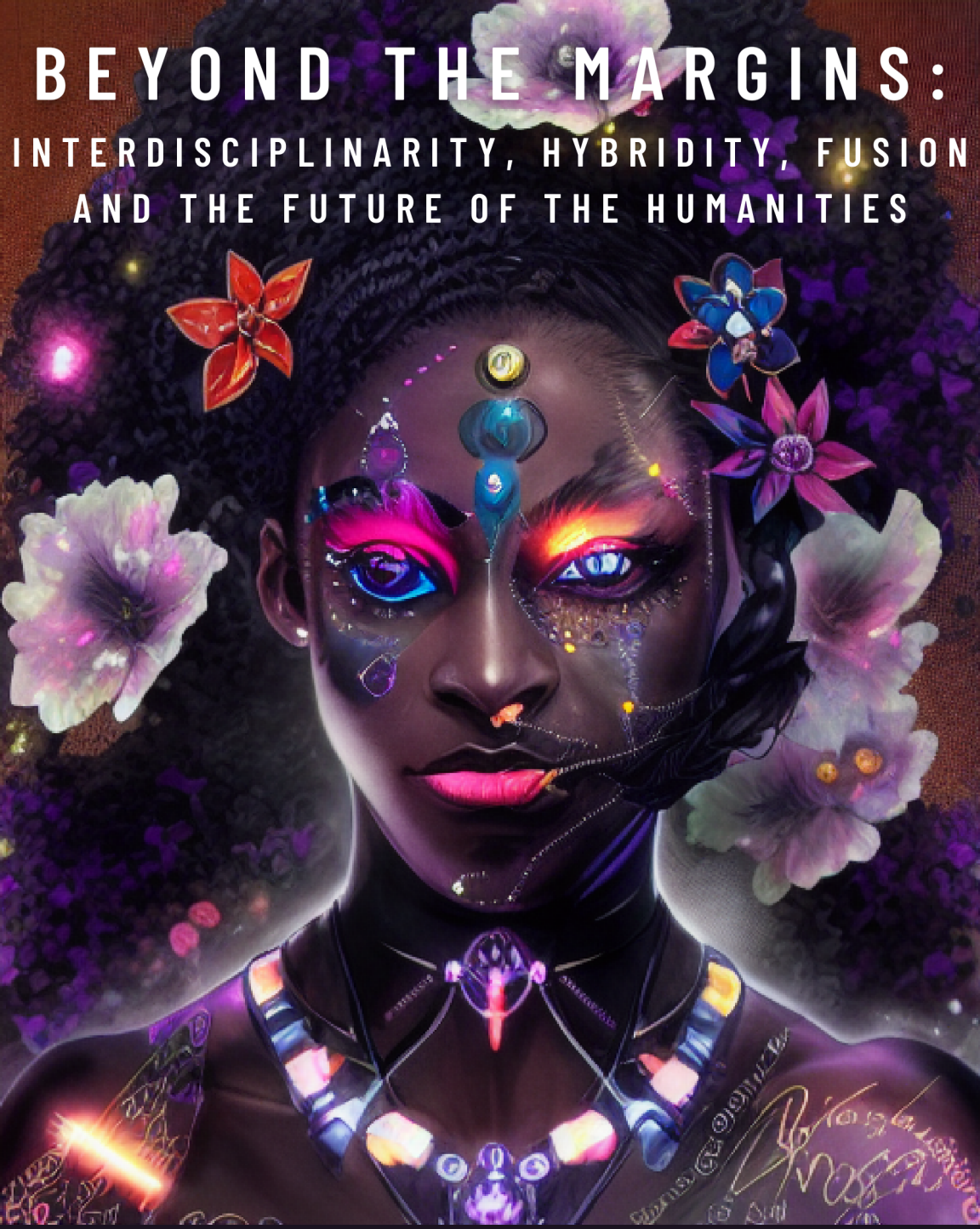
BEYOND THE MARGINS:

INTERDISCIPLINARITY, HYBRIDITY, FUSION AND THE FUTURE OF THE HUMANITIES



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"**Beyond the Margins:**
Interdisciplinarity, Hybridity, Fusion and the Future of the Humanities"
Volume 20, Issue 1, Spring 2023

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Beyond the Margins:
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Table of Contents

Introduction: Imagining New Futures for our Ancestors

Sana Younis

We live in a time where rabid supremacists and fascists seek to attack and silence writers of color and marginalized identities by banning books and further erasing us from history. We live in a time where right wing conservatives attack women's reproductive rights and attempt to litigate our bodies and our lives. We live in a time where the systems of power continue to dehumanize people based on race, gender, and sexuality.

We live in a time where the death of humanities and humanity has been foretold, as in every era preceding this one. Yet we, humans, continue to survive. We continue to create. We continue to bend the laws of time and space to imagine better futures for our ancestors, our descendants, ourselves. What is humanity without our stories?

In this issue we center academic and creative work that reflect the multifaceted possibilities of the humanities. Humanities scholarship often effectively combines interdisciplinary methods, theories, frameworks, perspectives, and genres to the study of literature, popular culture, the material world, and the human. Creative writers and artists create transcendent works that fuse, invent, or synthesize different forms, mediums, genres, and styles. The humanities tradition is being remade and enriched by the convergence of literary study, popular culture, material culture, social media, art, and activism. The texts selected for this issue present the various fusions and convergences taking place in the humanities. Our writers and artists present a variety of ways to explore the questions: What are the past(s), present(s), and future(s) of humanities scholarship?

This issue begins with artwork by **Abdullah Khan** that explores the future faces of New York City and centers Black women. Following that are two poems by **Sandy Feinstein** that show the coiled power of poetry and the interpolations of science, nature and Romanticism in a way that captures many of the themes evoked in this issue. Next is a groundbreaking, evocative exploration by **Parker Miles**, of the intersections between Afrofuturisim, cyborg theory, and cyborg literacies to envision "Black youth hew new and (im)possible futures." **Mark DiMauro** argues that artificial intelligence and machine learning are here, that Pandora's Box cannot be closed, so we must work with these tools to write the future. With the future in sight, an interview with Dr. Jacqueline Royster by **Faria Sookdeo** reminds us that Black women have always been here and have been at the forefront of the struggle for liberation and justice for all. Writing to the future includes recovering ancestors and voices from our pasts.

The next sequence opens with an interview by **Michael Smith**, with Dr. Bertrand Westphal, introducing the burgeoning field of geocriticism which centers on the "belief that space is at least in part discursively constructed" and one that expands the hagiography of a text to include its geographicality. **Jessica Mintzes** provides an erudite analysis of Gaston "Bachelard's imaginative and psychological examination of the spaces we dwell in and the

relationship between inhabitant and physical space." An exquisite photo journal by **Andrés Franco Harnache** develops the relationship between place, photography and creativity in a meditative, inspiring look at art and artist.

Bridging the discussion of space, past and future and conservation are three profound, elegiac oil paintings by **Nicole Assunta DiCamillo** that capture the "deeply rooted connection between" the living and "their environment." The next two interviews, by **Richard Marranca**, look at the imbricated relationship between archaeology, technology and the humanities. The concept of archaeological conservation, leaving sites for future historians to find and study with new tools and perspectives, beautifully captures how fluid academic scholarship can and should be.

Jade Hichborn reviews a book that adds a vital voice to disability and queer studies scholarship while also raising questions around anachronisms and what representation and "authentic" representation can or should mean. **Alexander Radisson** uses monster theory to discern how transhuman science fiction as a "genre allows us to envision these futures, anticipate difficult philosophical and ethical concerns, and examine our own prejudices." **Haleigh Hayes** goes on to trace how " artificial intelligence, androids, and other synthetic entities exist in the margins" in comic and film explorations of the Superman mythos. **Katie Fritsche** applies psychoanalytic theory to a popular anime, *Demon Slayer*.

James Imperatrice focuses "on the connections between medieval theology, classical mythology, and French feminism within Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* and emphasizes the need for more feminism everywhere and everywhen. **Nayoung Seo** brings together a global study of Romanticism in four texts including a BTS song. This section closes with striking images by **Megan Chapman** that show the "playfulness of simplifying form and color" to create a multitude of perspectives and interpretations.

Naruhiko Mikado argues that perhaps we have been quick to declare the end of the human era and that humanity still has much to offer. **Adel Sliti**, in a study of Wendy Copeland's genre-defying poems writes, "Poetry, in this way, turns into an imperial genre, digesting other genres and making use of them, to lay claim to a transient social reality." **Elizabeth Kaufman**, in a poem, relates how COVID has changed our understanding of how to be human and what to prioritize in our one life. This issue culminates with a poem by **Mosammat Sultana** that asks us what more we can do for our fellow humans in the now.

The importance of historical and political movements within the humanities continues to fill the pages of *The Humanities Review,* and we would like to thank everyone who has contributed to our publication. For this issue, we'd like to particularly thank Dr. Amy King, Dr. LaToya Sawyer, Dr. Granville Ganter, Dr. Raj Chetty, and Dr. Robert Fanuzzi for their guidance, advice, and support.

Abdullah Khan is a senior at CUNY City College studying computer science. His interests include anime, game design, and art. His favorite manga and anime is One Piece and he thinks everyone should check it out. *The Future is Cybernetic* is a series of digital illustrations inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement and the growth of artificial intelligence and cybernetics. The first series centers Black women as central to any depiction of the humans of New York City.

Sandy Feinstein's interest in "fusion" is long standing. She has taught with biologists and chemists, and the experience has informed her creative and scholarly publications. She has published on Milton and chemistry in *Paradise Lost* as well as on a chemical formula in *Dracula*. Her creative scholarship, coauthored with the biologist with whom she is teaching a course on creativity this semester, appears in *Intraspection* and *Pedagogy*.

Sublimation

A human hand could take solids
ice, grass, magma, bone
resolve them into gas
steam, methane, plasma, spirit
with heat, pressure, hydrogen
and carbon, just one organic molecule
to make air seem heavy,
something to rise above.

Unrecognizable glacier,
baby bluestem, volcanic rock;
legs, arms, toes, fingers, ribcage
as if matter
didn't matter when romantics
claim transcendence
and Christians promise resurrection
from decomposition and sin burned away.

Canti Avium

Blame the biologists,
systematists of characters,
beak shape, bone length
coloration, size, song.

Cranky ornithologists
unlikely lovers
of modernists that mix it up
with mockingbird allusions.

Non-referential sound
Stein would appreciate,
were it not voiced by a towhee
indifferent to tea.

Language poets indeed
whose audience hears
“Peter, Peter, Peter.”
“Drink your teeeaaa.”
“Sweet, so sweet.”

Scientists want to be poets, too,
or literary theorists,
make the rules, literally
notate color, feathery features:
rufous sided, tufted, yellow warbler.

Then break the pattern,
mix metaphors
and make up names
towhee, towhee, towhee.

Parker Miles is a PhD Candidate at University of Michigan Schools of Education and Information. His work is animated by the life, joy, and freedom-making practices that Black kids undertake in their everyday lives, on and offline. His dissertation project is a co-designed afterschool makerspace where Black youth can practice and develop cyborg literacies in a third space "loophole of retreat." After defending, he hopes to develop digital literacy policy and programming for schools and districts serving Black students.

METHODS FOR TWO-STRAND TWIST, OR THEORIZING THE AFRO-CYBORG

This essay is an argument for *pleasure* in the confusion
of boundaries and for *responsibility* in their construction – Donna Haraway

PART 1: SOME DEFINITIONS

I spent a shoulder-aching fall learning to manage my hair as it grew in the winter of 2019. My hair had been longer in my youth, but there had always been somebody mama, auntie, sister, or girl that would braid it, if I kept it clean. They'd love me and do it for free, or we'd barter; either way, they were rarely gentle. I giggle at the memory. Siloed in Michigan, plotting on Black futures, I procured my own creams and combs and thanked God that my utilities were bundled into rent, then began to prepare for my first two-strand twist. Forty minutes later, the coiffure has been washed and conditioned and sectioned with alligator clips. My shoulders ache. Another YouTube tutorial autoplays. In these transcendent moments, I plait ancestral practices, home-grown skills, and technological fluency to remake myself; I'll argue that so doing, I embody cyborg literacies: practices of Black sense-, self-, joy-, and worldmaking with and through the digital. Like so many of the youth with whom I work as an educator and researcher, I use these mundane practices to hew new and impossible futures, every day. Alas, I have digressed. Water drips down my wrists to the floor. I sigh at a mirror that is still too fogged to sigh back. My shoulders, after these few moments' respite, are again compliant. Now the real work begins.

Afrofuturism is a heuristic for storytelling that centers Black people and Black culture and explores the infinite possibilities of Black technoculture. In contrast to science fiction that might merely include Black characters, Afrofuturist texts more complete representations of Black people by attending to Black histories, Black ways of knowing, and Black desires. Through close and hard looks at the gendered and racialized realities and atrocities that Black folks have endured, Alondra Nelson writes, Afrofuturism

"excavate[s] and create[s] original narratives of identity, technology, and the future and offer critiques of the promises of prevailing theories of technoculture (Nelson 9)." These critiques are necessary because the prevailing theories imagine Black people as the unfortunate stragglers, always already on the wrong side of the "digital divide" between the haves and the have nots—if they imagine Black people at all. This tendency pervades lay discourses and academic research alike (Brock 6).

Afrofuturist works crystallize examples of how the African diasporic experience can be brought to bear on the changes that technological "innovation" foments in our lives. Afrofuturism is a lens through which Black readers might "interpret, engage, design, or alter reality for the re-imagination of the past, the contested present, and as a catalyst for the future" (Rico 231). Nelson's introduction to the 2000 *Social Text* anthology is itself an Afrofuturist text, an "alternate configuration" in which Nelson draws on subaltern histories—decades old theory from across genres— to describe the means by which we might produce futures in which Black folks exist and thrive. In this way, she suggests that Afrofuturist methods are manifold— the Afrofuturist is ready to take up any useful techne and lever it against the symbolic and literal annihilation whiteness demands.

There is a caveat: in order for the lever to have any purchase, Nelson argues, it must be "rooted in the past but not weighed down by it, contiguous yet continually transformed" (Nelson p. 8). By insisting on this rootedness, Afrofuturism challenges the ways in which "past" and "future" are held in opposition, contending instead that any construction of the future that severs connections to the past is at best, horribly limited. This disruption-by-inclusion is foundational to the genre. The notion of an incredibly generative breakdown between supposed binaries may remind folks of another tool of speculation and future building: the figure of the cyborg.

Haraway's cyborg is a metaphorical figure and scientific reality that exposes how the binaries that define the modern human subject— human/machine, human/animal, physical/non-physical— can be reimagined. It is a myth[1] "about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities, which progressive people might explore as one part of needed political work" (Haraway 13). In a literal sense, she suggests, as modern technologies become incorporated with human bodies as well as human lives, people are "becoming" the Sci-Fi cyborg: electronic and networked**.** Metaphorically, the cyborg is a walking contradiction, a monstrous (im)possibility, a "fiction mapping our social and bodily reality and [...] an imaginative resource suggesting some very fruitful couplings." (Haraway 6). The construction of the fictive cyborg body therefore invites us to reflect on the construction of the human body, which is itself a chimera, blended, extended, imaginary[2]. The cyborg "wants" us to write a new reality, particularly one where women and nature have agency and where the impulses to Other, hierarchize, control, and dominate are neutered.

[1] perhaps like "freedom", "justice," or "America" itself

[2] Black studies (eg. Wynter, Spillers); feminisms (WHO), disability scholars (such as) have long noted their exclusion from the category of human.

The manifesto itself is a volatile array of exposed fault lines. Haraway offers a litany of slippages between the binaries, an incantation swooning toward liberation. By weaving feminist, socialist, and materialist critiques, she presents a polyphonic, hybridized text, a version of the multiple identities we might all productively embody. Haraway suggests this is play of the most serious kind, writing that the Manifesto is " an argument for *pleasure* in the confusion of boundaries and for *responsibility* in their construction" (Haraway 7). The text takes some such responsibility, naming the new "informatics of domination" as well as the means by which women and men might subvert their ever-expanding clutches. After all, "what people are experiencing is not transparently clear, and *we lack sufficiently subtle connections for collectively building effective theories of experience"* (Haraway 51, emphasis added). The infidel, heteroglossic cyborg offers itself as a map to, example of, and a blueprint for the subtle, collective, effective theory on which our liberation depends. The cyborg is a story "about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other" (Haraway 55). As it turns out, the cyborg and the Afrofuturist seize similar tools to mark the world.

PART 2: "WE GO TOGETHER. THE LONG WAY", OR NOTES ON AN AFROCYBORG

> The cyborg is born at that moment in which the convergence of interests among anyone and everyone seeking or dodging freedom is inescapable and inescapably recognized; the cyborg glimpses the possibilities of permanent revolution, as the veil descends. This convergence is cemented in more than blood and rational choice. It is shaped by imagination and memory, longing and aversion. - Joy James

Generally, one must not deviate from the method: wash, rinse. Wash, rinse, condition, and comb out the kinks. In sections, apply leave-in, oil, styling cream. These will soon each be helixes, data Black femmes have been coding into lil' nappy boys heads since time immemorial. A protective style, which implies Black hair itself is a technology, no? runpy.run_module(Twostrand.style). The hand is a poor tool at this scale, so append the prosthesis pencilgrip.Pintailcomb to part. Leftthand_combflip: righthand_pinch and comb out gently to avoid breakage. Swipe a fingersmudge of custard then grab hold of your two ends. Pull firmly and begin to twist.

Cyborg Theory and Afrofuturism have very deep methodological similarities. First, despite lay discourses about them, neither the cyborg nor the Afrofuturist are interested in pure fantasy in their futurisms; in fact the opposite is the case. As Nelson notes, our appraisal, like Stone's, must be one that "does not simply look to what is seemingly new about the self in the "virtual age" but looks backward and forward in seeking to provide insights about identity, one that asks what was and what if" (Nelson 12). For the Afrofuturist, there must be a recognizance so there can come reckoning. Haraway's manifesto does this by invoking the relations that have created the particular social (and economic and political and geographical) locations at which women are located in late

capitalism; it is impossible for the cyborg to live up to its potential without locating itself first, before calibrating just what perversity it might unholster to disrupt problematic dualisms.

Both Nelson and Haraway raise the power of alternate stories, narratives, and myths as a tool for deprogramming hegemonic castes of race, gender, and sexuality. The fundamental myth that both the Cyborg and Afrofuturism disrupt is the myth of the human. That which we colloquially call the human— and pointedly abbreviate to "Man"—is a fabrication built on domination (Wynter). The human is an accumulated set of meanings that produced a series of hierarchies based on a false but violently defended notion of "'the body' as a stable and unchanging ground for human identity. The Cartesian man, "rational" and enlightened, male and whole, became the default human in Western thought. The economics of European colonialism in Africa, Asia, and the Americas influence this; as clearly as the category of human was delineated, so too was the subhuman, the Black, the other. [3]

Haraway describes the cyborg as the "illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism"—these, themselves the offspring of the colony— but notes, "illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential" (Haraway 9). The cyborg rejects Western liberal subjectivity, interrupting our assumptions about what is "natural," who is "human," and of course, what and who can never be either. The black speculative imagination interrupts similarly. Afrofuturist and other Black speculative texts suggest there are figures, metaphors, and orientations that are more generative than current hierarchies. The cyborg is one such. The cyborg's Afrofuturist analogs include "jes grew[4]," Du Boisian double consciousness[5], and anachronism[6]. From Octavia Butler's "Xenogenesis" which interrupts scripts of sex and reproduction, to Samuel Delaney's oeuvre, which troubles sexuality, labor, and desire**.** Afrofuturists blaspheme against normative notions of what's "natural" for bodies to do and be. These works refute white male hegemonies and open up possibilities for ways of being that reconstruct society.

The cyborg and the Afrofuturist are not alone in this endeavor. For the better part of a century, philosophers have reflected on the category of human and sought to improve it. The "new human" breaks from the mind-set and embodiments of the old; and its transcendence of thought and constitution are staples in western literature (Thomsen). A full discussion of posthumanisms, transhumanisms, and counterhumansisms is beyond the scope of this paper[7]. Instead, I offer a few handholds from across disciplines that

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[3] On Black folks (Wynter 1995); oppressed genders (Butler 1994); colonized subjects (Fanon 1986)
[4] See Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*
[5] See Nemmers (2019) *Digital Double Consciousness;* Hall (2011) *Designing from their own social worlds: The Digital story of three African American Young Women*
[6] See Reed's *Flight to Canada*
[7] See Melvin G. Hill's *Black Bodies and Transhuman Realities*; N Katherine Hayles' *How we became posthuman*; Zakiyyah Jackson's *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an AntiBlack world;* Sylvia Wynter's *Unsettling the Coloniality of Being*

describe how the cyborg— and particularly how the hybrid AfroCyborg— moves past the Anthropocene.

Prophesying to this end about what Fanon called the "henceforward,"[8] Joy James offers yet another cyborg, the Black Cyborg, the rebel intellectual who has recognized, finally, "the indissoluble ties of the individual and the mases seeking freedom" (61). James' invocation of the cyborg has a different conceptual genealogy than Haraway's[9], with similar aims—ending colonial relations that require (in this case) Black abjection. James continues:

> *The new being, the rebel intellectual, is now cyborg; it is individual and collective, in overt and covert rebellion, alive because everyone has now become mechanized in its rebellion, with the spiritual force of freedom driving it— biological, mechanical, divine. (61)*

There is certainly tension between these two epistemologies, but not so much, to me, as to render them incomprehensible. Invoking the cyborg risks the social production of an exceptional Black class who are privileged enough to access technology and safe enough to play with it. Vargas and James (2012) remind us that these efforts—the misplaced efforts to prove oneself exceptional enough to attain human status—are futile. Moreover, the histories of robotics and labor and race intersect with the cyborg. Computing advancements in the 20th century, including vitally, Norbert Weiner's cybernetics reshaped the ways we organized people and labor. Chude Sokei (2019) indicates how it is no surprise that the "Human Use of Human beings" was an appropriate metaphor for the future of work, "because the evolution of robotics and cybernetics explicitly borrowed from and were imaged through the rhetoric, assumptions, and social positions of blacks" (161). In short, people made these machines because it was no longer palatable to force labor through physical and social dominance. Master-slave relationships between whites and Blacks were replaced by the "master-slave" relation foundational to computing. Cybernetics then, is a "science of computation and control systems[;] merely a thin disguise for methods of social domination and control" (Eglash, 1995, 18). This is all to say: the cyborgic cannot be taken up uncritically, or we risk reproducing the same labor dynamics, the same capitalist use of bodies and their tools in service of a privileged few.

More, we risk overstating the metaphor of the prosthesis. Haraway indicates a range of ways in which our bodies have been recomposed with machinic parts- from eyeglasses to pacemakers to the quintessential walking cane. These prostheses illustrate one kind of posthumanism, "an ontological condition in which many humans now, and increasing will, live with chemically, surgically, [and] technologically modified bodies" (Nayar 3). The "new man" has some origins in post-World War I Germany, where the "medical-technical industry" (Fineman) fitted thousands of soldiers with prosthetic limbs to get them back to work (Eerikanen). As human reproduction continues to be shaped by technological interventions, the boundaries between natural and engineered blurs and blurs. However, swept up in jouissance of these language games we elide the lived

[8] See Fanon's *Wretched of The Earth*
[9] See Vargas and James *Refusing Blackness as Victimization: Trayvon Martin and the Black Cyborgs*

experiences of people with disabilities who have used prosthetics quite literally (Serlin). Black folks with disabilities particularly endure not only erasure from many of our discourses about disability, but the discursive use of disability in the construction of whiteness and the advancement of racist tropes (Pitts). "Supercrip" narratives and "inspiration porn" derived from public displays of disability being "fixed" and "overcome" via prostheses proliferate virally (Schalk).

Another risk is the overstatement and overextension of technes of race and gender[10]. Whiteness has been theorized as prosthetic, "detachable" from white bodies in ways that processes of racialization render inaccessible for Black bodies (Preston)[11]. Haraway's Cyborg ostensibly offers a means for making sense of the experiences and identities of women of color; the "potent subjectivity synthesized from fusions of [their] outsider identities" (Haraway). In the years since its popularization in STS and cyberfeminisms, Black feminists have offered pointed critiques about appropriation and the invisibility of race in Haraway's manifesto. For instance, Jabir Puar's Cyborg Goddess suggests the efficacy of assemblage as an alternative to the Cyborg-cum-hybrid, which in fact reifies the binary distinction between human and machine even as it occupies the intersection between them[12]. Ashleigh Wade Greene, drawing a trajectory from Hortense Spillers, Sylvia Wynter, and Alexander Weheliye, offers "viral blackness," a reimagining of humans as virtual-physical assemblages and of Blackness as a "dynamic discursive-material hybrid," in ways that liberates black folk from the shackles of the "Man" that organizes western liberal philosophy and politics (Wade). These interventions offer platforms from which to examine the conditions and possibilities of contemporary Black life that don't rely on the cyborg and its histories.

PART 3: TOWARD CYBORG LITERACIES

> Where dominant discourse seeks to develop upgrades of the current notions of humanity as man, improvements are not the aim or product of the imaginaries borne of political violence; instead they summon forms of human emancipation that can be imagined but not (yet) described. - Alex Weheliye

Trick to a good two-strand is to twirl each strand around its finger while you twist them around each other so that the coils stack neatly and any wayward would-be tangling ends are corralled, collapsing inward on one another, recursive, shrinking against the roots as they dry, leaving the scalp free to be oiled.

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[10] See Coleman's *Race as Technology;* Butler, *Gender Trouble*

[11] See *"The Battle of Algiers"* (1966) for a film that imagines the prosthetic use of whiteness for Black liberation

[12] Puar Cites Diane Carrier who writes: "In the construction of a cyborg, technologies are added to impact upon, and at some point intersect with a discrete, non-technological 'body.' . . . Thus, insofar as the hybrid cyborg is forged in the intermeshing of technology with a body, in a process of addition, it leaves largely intact those two categories—(human) body and technology—that preceded the conjunction" (p. 323)

Afrofuturist and Cyborg conceptualizations are a conjugal pair whose careful union, with luck and close reading, can sow the seeds of liberation. Black folks been known this. Afrofuturism and Black speculative thought can flesh out the post-human epoch for which the cyborg is poster child by insisting that there will and must be Black people in the future. The implication of AfroCyborg intervention is that our future existence requires contemporary intervention. So: I take on the charge of cultivating orientations through which Black folks can act on and survive platform capitalism. The greatest result of this combination is that which I hope to help Black students develop: agencies through which they can affect change on the social structures that oppress them, together, "from the bottom up" (Fanon 35). Like Puar holding intersectionality and assemblage together, I believe Afrofuturist and Cyborg thinking "need not be oppositional, but rather [...] frictional" (Puar 50). With enough friction we could get a grip. We could develop the manual dexterity to wrest control of the ever-shifting and increasingly datafied operationalizing of transmisogynoir, of xenophobia, of anti-Blackness. With enough friction, we could start a fire.

Black radical thought continues to take up the cyborg's affordances for speculation and political organizing. After Gunn (2020), I read the cyborg less as "humanity and technology gracelessly mashed together", but rather "as a new genre of being, [...] a virtual-physical assemblage equipped to both travel through and make worlds for Black feminists who seek refuge, feminist discourse, and methods for moving through online spaces" (70). In her 2019 *Glitch Feminism*, Legacy Russell explores how gendered performances of self on-and offline are productive glitches– necessary processes of self-creation. She writes: "the glitched self is always on the move. This diasporic journey of online to offline is a mode of pathogenesis, reproducing oneself without fertilization—splitting, merging, emerging. This is the rubric for an embodied political technology that queers proudly, creating space for new bodies and cosmic selves" (47). These agencies—toward flight, for seeking and creating spaces of refuge, toward play and joymaking—are literacies that Black youth already employ in their online and offline lifeworlds.

It becomes ever clearer that those of us who love and teach Black youth cannot imagine that technological advances are implicitly liberative; rather we must look to our pasts as guides closely to assess them. Nelson (2002) invites us, noting that "the catacombs are not an archaic, occult place to be left behind for the clean light of modern science and technology but rather the gateway to a more complete understanding of the future" (7). This proves itself to be true again and again. Man is not the only myth dissolved in the catacombs. Within them, we can trace histories of surveilling Black bodies that illuminate the machinations of the 21st century police state (Browne, 2016). We can reveal schooling as a site of epistemic violence, where Black educators and students move fugitively and take flight (Givens 2020; Sojoyner, 2018). These archives tell stories of technology's uses to oppress, contain, and control. Even the cyborg must be invoked

carefully, or we run the risk reproducing the "master-slave" labor relations that structured plantation economics[13].

These gifts keep giving. While my burgeoning research agenda has its roots dug into the rich loam of Black kids' critical literacies[14], its newest tendrils reach for the agencies that Black kids' digital practices inculcate. I've become increasingly transfixed by questions about the relationship between our physical and digitally mediated selves. For about a year I beat my head against my whiteboard, trying to figure out why online and offline identities were so often imagined as binary in education literature. Saskia Sassen's "Toward a sociology of Information Technology" stirred that primordial cauldron with lightning, and I began diagramming the imbrication of the real and the virtual, considering smartphone, SNS, XR, and geotagging activity—the bleeding edge of which Black kids so often hone from the margins—and the ways in which Black kids' IRL and digital identities are mutually constitutive. Russell's (2019) *Glitch Feminism* was a lighthouse in a sea of possibility. As I troubled the online/offline binary, both Haraway's paean for the possibilities that such slippages engender and Afrofuturism's necessary historical embeddedness loomed large. Braided together, they have ramifications for new and old ways of supporting Black kids in their sense-, self-, joy-, and world-making practices. I call these plaits cyborg literacies.

Cyborg literacies include the whole constellation of life affirming practices that Back kids undertake in an increasingly mediated world. These are broader than "merely" media literacies—though folks like Lewis (2022) are bringing the posthuman to bear in that regard as well. Cyborg literacies include but are not limited to: Reading and writing within (and with knowledge of) antiblack discourses and media structures (Muhummad and Womack 2015; Phelps-Ward and Laura 2016); practices through which Black youth create and embody their digital selves (Lewis Ellison 2014; Wargo 2018; Russell 2019; Guimares and Moita Lopes 2016; Viola 2020); practices through which Black youth manage networked sociality (Marwick and boyd 2014; Vickery 2014; Harvey and Ringrose 2017; Elsaesser, Patton, Kelley, Santiago, & Clarke 2020); practices of seeking and developing affinity and community groups across Internet commutation technologies and social networking sites (Pierre 2019; Wade 2019); Black kids' plans for leveraging digital technologies for labor and/or income (Okonkwo et al. 2020); Black kids' practices of joymaking and play through video and online games (Lewis Ellison 2014; Gray 2020); Black kids' practices of obfuscation and defiance (Pierre 2019; Kelly 2019).

These practices join a tradition of Black digital practices that are an embodiment of Black aliveness, the jouissance with which Black folks interface with the digital—within and beyond frameworks of "resistance" (Russel 2019; Brock 2019; McGlotten 2016). Their prehensile partiality is a feature, not a bug. The Afro-Cyborg is fundamentally a trickster and this quality is fundamental to its potential. Faucheux and Lavender III (2018) illuminate how "Haraway's metaphoric cyborg can be identified as a trickster because of the 'potent

[13] See Louis Chude Sukei's *The Sound of Culture*; Ron Eglash's *The Mutual Constitution of People and Machines*
[14] Critical digital literacies (Avila and Pandya 2013); fugitive literacies (Ohito 2017); critical media literacies (Lewis 2022)

fusions' of human/animal/machine that enable it to transgress boundaries'" (p. 39) in their treatment of Afrofuturist texts. They go on to suggest that a concise image of Afrofuturist essence is "the gleeful arrangement of oxymorons, the satirical power of inversion, and the happy disruption of established rules"— a literacy that empowers author and reader alike (Faucheux and Lavender III, 2018, p. 43). Haraway herself positions cyborg ontologies as "reconceptions of machine and organism as coded texts through which we engage in the play of writing and reading the world" (Haraway, p. 11). This play, these tricks, are fugitive literacies. As Ohito (2020) conceptualizes, fugitive literacies are tools which "awaken and animate education as the practice of liberation from whiteness and anti-Blackness." So as I look ahead to my future research, I'm thinking hard about whether and where Black adolescents are already concocting potent fusions and satirical inversions, and to what degree these fugitive literacies, mediated prosthetically, can be fomented safely.

I am The Afro-Cyborg, trickster, one as/of many, distributed[15]. For us, "liberation rests on the construction of the consciousness, the imaginative apprehension, of oppression, and so of possibility" (Haraway 6)." Without doubt, there is grief and rage and joy in the archive. The catacombs echo with the bonedust of millennia, the basso continuo of granddaddy lessons, and the digitized renderings of Black heads bust by police batons to the white meat, undeletable[16]—this is "the gateway to a more complete understanding of the future" (Nelson 7). The Afrocyborg rejects abjection and the liberal human subject whose definition requires it. Her technes and techniques shatter the illusory "Man" and his dominion. Cyborg literacies transgress (Hooks 1994). Through them, Black youth hew new and (im)possible futures.

So here as I recall ancestral knowledge, distributed across time, told singsong from girl cousins and tiktoks, I exchange prostheses once more, part and comb out again, leveraging fugitive technology to secure my own Black joy. When, precisely, were we not cyborgs?

[15] To be clear– I am *scyborg*, too. See La Paperson's *A Third University is Possible.*
[16] See Lathos *A Sea of Grief is Not a Proscenium*; Claudia Rankine's *Citizen and the Spectacle of Racist Violence in Cyberculture*

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Mark spends equal time studying digital humanities, classic literature (especially the Gothic), and attempting to innovate new methods of teaching and research when he's not tinkering with AI, and this article is his attempt to examine the role AI composition will take in the near future of the humanities, as well as explain the academic reaction to its adoption.

WHO WRITES THE FUTURE? PROPHETS, GHOSTS, AND THE NEW ROMANTIC

The advent of artificial intelligence composition technology, recently mainstreamed by the viral emergence of OpenAI's algorithmic composition portal named *ChatGPT*, has thrust the discussion of AI composition, AI ethics, and the consequences of the coming pedagogical revolution into the limelight. AI and machine learning algorithms, by virtue of their seemingly inevitable march forward in both sophistication and reach, have presented a unique challenge to the philosopher, the software developer, the educator, the critic, and the scholar. This essay will discuss the future of the reaction to such technology, as well as attempt to situate the contemporary reaction which balances almost evenly between astonishment and terror. By invoking theories presented by Derrida, Plato, Berlin, and Freud, as well as examining a primary text comparison by Jonathan Swift, I hope to convince the reader of two primary aims: chiefly, I argue that artificial intelligence and machine learning technology are not to be feared or avoided but instead embraced, and with such integration valuable insight, creative generation, and efficient composition techniques may be brought to bear within the academic sphere. Secondly, I argue that a

new artistic movement will likely precede such academic integration, and, in time, like all movements before it, be they artistic, social, cultural, or political, will eventually sort itself into adherents, critics, and zealots. This artistic movement, reactionary to algorithmic communication, I have called the *New Romantic*, for its similarity to the Romanticism of the 19th century, itself a reaction to the Enlightenment and the industrial revolution.

In 1726 Jonathan Swift published his magnum opus *Gulliver's Travels*, a ruthless political satire that skewered everything and everyone from religion to morality to political figures. Replete with sarcastic, sometimes almost prophetic scenes, the titular Gulliver travels betwixt fictional islands (and a fictionalized Japan) as a pretense for Swift to lampoon nobility, literature, science, morality, and natural law. For our purposes, we must take a trip alongside Gulliver to the land of Laputa, a flying isle in which every citizen is so enamored with technology and mathematics that they cannot possibly abide normal conversation. So tied to the wonder, power, and possibility of technology are the citizens of Laputa that they have abandoned all forms of human interaction, and Gulliver, rapidly bored by the vapid nature of their faux interactions, desires to leave. He does so by descending a rope to the island below and quickly visits another isle on which stands an academy called Lagado, which produced the wisest and brightest scholars of the flying isle.

Lagado's "academics" (and I use the word loosely) are failed scholars and artisans, who were unable to achieve the same success in knowledge as their brethren in Laputa. Swift goes through great detail describing their misguided attempts at experimentation, a caricature of scientific rigor, including an experiment regarding a room full of spiderwebs and a scientist attempting to extract sunshine from cucumbers (168). One such experiment, however, stands out from the rest, both as prophetic and for Gulliver's positive reaction upon seeing it demonstrated:

> [The professor] assured me, that this invention had employed all of his thoughts from his youth, that he had emptied the whole vocabulary into his frame, and made the strictest computation of the general proportion there is in books between the numbers of particles, nouns, and verbs, and other parts of speech…[he] showed me several volumes in large folio already collected, of broken sentences, which he intended to piece together, and out of those rich materials to give the world a complete body of all arts and sciences…(169-170)

The majority of Swift's description of Lagado is satire aimed at individuals that eschew humanity for the sake of scientific research, assumed to be The Royal Society or The University of Leiden (Palomo 1) as Swift clearly has little time for such laughable, inconsequential experiments. The fascinating thing, then, despite the satirical nature of the text, is the prophetic similarity between the professor's "vocabulary device" and modern artificial intelligence as constituted, a system that generates "knowledge" from fragments of previous communication. The professor "emptied the whole vocabulary into the frame" (Swift 170), much like ChatGPT and its predecessors were trained using a combination of Reddit, Wikipedia, and journalistic sources (Fridman). Words are constructed via a random shuffling of these vocabulary tablets until fragmentary

sentences are collected and transposed (Swift,170), much as modern algorithmic communication operates, except with a neural net replacing happenstance (Fridman). The full structure of a neural net is complex and beyond the scope of this essay, but, succinctly, as explained neural nets are computational structures that mimic the human brain; systems which aggregate data points from various observational points (colloquially "neurons," analogous to the human brain, hence the nomenclature) which assign weights (importance) to data points according to a model, a data structure usually in the form of a JSON file (JavaScript Object Notation). Humans write this model and the neural net observes its interactions and predicts, with a percentage of certainty, how closely the generated text mimics the preferred completion found in the original (Wolfram).

To Swift, modern-day algorithmic composition would be a satire of authentic communication. It generates ideas without knowledge, promotes content without understanding, and substitutes semantic understanding for syntactical accuracy. No new thoughts, ideas, structures of knowledge, or systems of discovery are present in the professor's work; rather, Gulliver is merely witnesses to the happenstance of probability organized into a system that coincidentally resembles communication. When confronted with this apparatus, rather than critique its seeming unnecessary structure or argue that its source of textual generation is *coincidence* rather than *reason*, Gulliver, in keeping with both the satire and his characterization as English everyman, instead lauds the invention: "…I ever had the good fortune to return to my native country, that I would do [the professor] justice as the sole inventor of this wonderful machine" (170). Gulliver's view here, which appears to hold the written text as the object worthy of plaudits, ignores the text as *propagator of new knowledge* or *knowledge patterns*, it ignores it as *potential artistic endeavor* or *triumph*, and it ignores the process of creation and destruction as immaterial, or at least secondary, to the purpose, structure, and ultimate pragmatic application of the final product. It is an argument for product over process, and both roughly and accurately describes the viewpoint adopted by many in their reactions to ChatGPT and other algorithmic communication devices.

I postulate that this critique–the argument that algorithmic composition is *mimetic communication* of the form Plato argued against nearly 2000 years earlier–is the primary driver of consternation amongst AI. Both of these positions–Swift's argument that mimetic or satirical communication is promoted by the device, and Gulliver's take on its marketability–are equally faulty. Neither considers the power of algorithmic generation as a brainstorming device, for example; AI can be used not to complete text but to generate it during the drafting stage of writing, or as a type of sounding board in the absence of human editors. Neither Swift nor Gulliver examines the efficiency and speed at which commonly used literary structures may be substituted for generated text, reducing the strain on the scholar and increasing the speed at which new publications may be generated. Both assume, much like Searle, that semantic understanding is a precondition for knowledge, but neither acquiesce to the pragmatic implications of mimetic processes. In other words, the reaction to algorithmic communication would be far better served if

viewed as a leap forward in communicative efficiency rather than as threat to creative output.

Further, the power and ubiquity of mimetic learning, even when applied to communication, is well documented and undeniable. We learn to write, for example, by reading great writers and mimicking them, continuing a process which we naturally engage from a young age. As described by Christoph Wulf in "Mimesis in Early Childhood":

> With the help of their mimetic abilities, children acquire the meaning of objects and forms of representation and action…especially true of the development of their aesthetic sensibility and their ability to experience empathy, pity, affection, and love. Mimesis does not however denote mere imitation…rather, it is a creative process by which the act of relating to other persons and worlds in a mimetic way leads to an enhancement of one's own worldview, action, and behavior. (Introduction)

Both Plato and Wulf acknowledge both the power and ubiquity of mimesis, and although Plato insists on careful regulation of such pedagogical methods, he nevertheless notes that this key learning process cannot be extricated from humanity. Wulf also notes that "mere imitation" is less effective than the "creative process" described by mimesis. The imitation with algorithmic communication is that which is found in the system's output, while the creative process is developed by the human reaction to such communication. It would be a mistake, for example, to trust the output of the system as accurate (that is to say, semantically accurate as opposed to syntactically accurate) or artistic–this would constitute, in Wulf's scenario, "mere imitation." However, when the user of such software develops ideas and knowledge from the use of such a tool, imitation is replaced by mimesis, and the critical and creative process may continue naturally.

The complex mental process of what we colloquially term learning can be equally attributable to understanding as well as memory, and algorithmic communication constructs the latter such that we may concentrate on the former. It speeds the efficiency of learning rather than acting as an impediment to it, though such an argument would be difficult to make to an educator in the contemporary era convinced that such technology will replace the traditional academic system as constituted. An analogous comparison may be made here to the visual arts: the act and art of painting did not utterly vanish with the advent of powerful color photography. Similarly, the act and art of composition, creativity, and the literary arts will likewise *not* be subsumed by algorithmic processes.

Plato was some 2000 years removed from the advent of artificial intelligence, and Swift almost three hundred, but each seemingly predicts the software system that, through analysis of human language patterns, is able to mimic the act of communication without understanding the knowledge behind such communication. We could not, as previously described, profess that such a system may assert *cognition* and *semantic understanding* rather than mere *syntactical replication.* For Plato, this is the furthest from the *truth* of knowledge, while for poor Gulliver, it is the epitome of convenience. On an almost instinctual level, for both Plato and for modern anti-AI arguments, algorithmic

communication is viewed as *further from truth*, or at least *further from knowledge*. The astonishment felt by Gulliver accurately mimics the emotive state within a world less interested in truth in the Platonic sense than in results. This reaction, however, is not the only one which stands to explain the immediate rejection of algorithmic communication from the academy out of hand. To explain this second potentiality, let us turn away from philosophy and toward human nature by examining an argument put forth by Freud, one that results in my own conceptualization of Uncanny Communication.

In 1899, Sigmund Freud first published *The Uncanny*, a psychological treatise that attempted to explain feelings of unease, anxiety, and superrealism encountered by the lay individual. While developing a name for this anxiety-inducing state, Freud eventually settles (with help from Jentch) on *unheimlich*. He states that "There is no doubt that [the uncanny] belongs to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread" (123), however, that, "The uncanny is that species of the frightening what goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (124). In other words, according to Freud, instances which would be considered "uncanny" and therefore, unsettling, arise from situations in which an individual is confronted by something that *should* be familiar, yet is somehow not. Of the various examples of his new concept upon which he muses, the most relevant to AI and the reaction to it-is Freud's description and construction of the doppelganger (the double). He describes it thusly:

> ...the appearance of persons who have to be regarded as identical because they look alike...there is the constant recurrence of the same thing, the repetition of the same facial features, the same characters, the same destinies, the same misdeeds, even the same names, through successive generations...the double has become an object of terror... (142-143)

To Freud, the appearance of the self, but *not*, causes extreme anxiety. This concept of doubling has been adopted into numerous technological applications, most notably in both nomenclature and form with the development of the Uncanny Valley, a term used by artists, graphic designers, and roboticists which describes the acceptance or rejection of machine simulacra of human imagery. First theorized by Masahiro Mori in 1970, Uncanny Valley describes the way in which humans are accepting of images that are both human in appearance (for example, a photograph) as well as strictly *inhuman* in appearance (for example, a cartoon). There exists an extreme dip in levels of acceptance to imagery, however, for simulacra which are almost human but not enough to fool perception. As the human likeness approaches a more accurate representation of humanity, our acceptance of it begins to dip, until the quality of the visage reaches a state where it is unrecognizable from "authentically human," at which point our acceptance again rises. When the simulacrum is almost, but not quite human, we recoil from it instinctively and violently, viewing it as a doppelganger of humanity–Freud's uncanny (Mori 1).

I postulate that precisely the same phenomenon is at work within the rejection of algorithmic communication; text which, as currently constituted, is almost, but not quite human-like, and so is rejected out of hand by those who expect it to be representative of

human communication. As technology, then, creeps closer and closer to a pure, unfettered imitation of human communication, so too does our acceptance of it decrease, falling further and further down the slope of the uncanny valley. This theory presupposes a few conclusions–chief amongst which is the assumption that the Uncanny Valley and our reaction to doppelgangers operates within text the same way it does within visual arts. I see no reason to dispute, and neither does Freud, that the doppelganger could not be of a thing rather than a person. Freud even describes a "village" as potentially a source of the uncanny if the people living in the homes are not those whom one remembers (144).

Secondly, it is interesting to note here that when we, as educators, ascribe grades to student work–signatories of communicative quality in the context of, for example, a typical composition class–there is little to none of this innate uncanny reaction. Human created text is met with far more succor than is algorithmically generated text, quality of either be damned. This means that in order for our theory of Uncanny Communication to be accurate, we must presuppose a version of communication that we identify as human, albeit in different forms and with different levels of quality, and second, that the notion of betrayal or inauthenticity generates feelings of resentment and anger which are not typically associated with student writing. It is perhaps then not the doppelganger of communication which angers us, but instead the notion that a mind capable of such communication–an artificial one, an uncanny doppelganger of a human one–exists. I will not draw a full conclusion here in the absence of any psychological studies examining human emotional reaction to algorithmically generated text, but I mention these points as, at least, potential explanations for the visceral, intense, almost instinctual rejection of AI from many institutions one might otherwise describe as open-minded.

The emotive state of the anxiety-ridden uncanny, however, is not limited to Freud, nor is it limited to the state of the "double," and, in fact, is explicitly referenced by Jacques Derrida in "The Eyes of Language: The Abyss and the Volcano." This extremely dense, intricate text is an analysis of a letter sent by Gershom Scholem to Franz Rosenweig in 1926, and includes discussions on the "sacred nature" (212) of language, the profane act of "desacralizing" (212) language, and a metaphorical "[sealing of] the abyss" (212), which attempts to explain the process through which the written word collapses the myriad possibilities within communication into singular, neigh-interpretable syntax.

Derrida also makes clear his concept within communicative methods what he terms "technological contamination" (211):

> Technological contamination, equivalent here to secularizing actualization, can only happen to [language] after the fact, and can only befall it secondarily as an evil, as this accidental death that occurs here to a dead-living language, in truth more living than the masquerading ghost in whose guise one claims to resuscitate it. (211)

He notes that such a view should be "problematized" (211) by stating that:

> The dissociation between originary and technological language – and therefore the implicit devalorization of technology as profanatory, secularizing, contaminating

> exteriority–also aims at a Christian idealism, an interiorization of spiritual meaning separated from the body in general, from time, from the letter or the carnal signifier. (211)

You have likely noted the interesting, strongly Gothic language used in the above quotations, including terms like "ghost," "dead-living," "evil," and even invoking Christian theology. Derrida was extremely interested in personifying language using the vocabulary and jargon of literature, and this example is no exception. His repeated references here, however, do more than illustrate his cosmopolitanism; in fact, they point to a reinforcement of Freud's concept of the uncanny, positing that language can, and does, bear similarity to psychological affectations, a conclusion which should be self-evident, considering that language is merely a form of manifestation of the human condition, into which anxiety and unease is similarly present. To wit:

> There is a specter because there is language, a language which names, calls, summons, invokes. Language can haunt because names, first and all, haunt out sentences. Names are neither present nor absent in these sentences, neither perceptible nor imperceptible, nor hallucinated either. The category of the spectral *revenant* is not a flower of rhetoric, it *figures*, more or less discreetly, thematically – and the word "ghostly" we have said, recurs twice – that which extracts the entire logic of [Scholem's] confession from oppositional onto-logic or from the dialectic of presence and absence. (Derrida 212)

It requires no leaps in logic here to immediately recognize the similarity between Derrida's description here of the act of naming and Freud's construction of the uncanny. Names "haunt," Derrida intimates. They are neither "perceptible nor imperceptible," much like the specter about which Freud writes at length. They are not the result of rhetoric, but rather have a fixed, though ephemeral, form.

This ephemerality is a source of the uncanny, as Freud noted. The secularization of language, as Derrida discusses, pulls it further from the sacred–the *perfect communication* or, if we agree with Plato, the *perfect form of communication*. Technology may contaminate language, and although Derrida disagrees with the nature of the religion at the heart of the discussion, he nevertheless asserts, through invocation of the term "abyss," that an incomprehensible form *does* exist. Algorithmically generated communication, therefore, is the *most secular*, the *most technologically contaminated*, and the *least capable* of containing the boundless possibilities the abyss presents, even if Derrida could not have possibly fathomed the extent to which "technological contamination" could subsume the creation of text. It is the furthest from the sacred, semantically speaking, as its syntactical ghost is a phantasm, a remnant, a doppelganger, of human communicative ability.

With this, then, the specter of semantic understanding haunting the uncanny words of AI as Derrida and Freud assert, an algorithmic form decried by Plato, mimetic of generative knowledge, a satire of communication on par with Swift's Academy of Lagado, we can clearly understand, and perhaps even sympathize with, the prevailing reaction to AI composition. Let us then turn to the question of the future, extrapolating to what extent,

and with what impact, such reactions will have on the ultimate near future of the technology and the text it creates.

For Isaiah Berlin, the origins, development, and ultimate impact of the Romantic movement as originally constituted are lengthy and complex. In *The Roots of Romanticism*, Berlin attempts to quantify the philosophical concepts that originate the movement. In his "Unbridled Romanticism," Berlin describes how after the movement had already spread across philosophical and political theaters, it made its way into artistic ones, bringing with it a burgeoning a fascination with the unknowable. "According to the Romantics," Berlin writes, "-and this is one of their principal contributions to understanding in general – what I mean by depth, although they do not discuss it by that name, is inexhaustibility, unembraceability" (103).

To Berlin, the Romantics made an art out of what has come to be known as the "sublime." The natural order, the unembraceable chaos, the unknowable yet instinctual; these are all hallmarks of Romantic art and poetry, which was fascinated by the human as a small actor in a grand ballet. He writes that the tendency of Romantic artists was to embrace equal parts "nostalgia…and paranoia" (104) noting that this feeling of nostalgia is exemplified by, as Novalis called it, "The search for the blue flower…[an] attempt to either absorb the infinite into myself, to make myself at one with it, or to dissolve myself into it" (105). The repeated invocation of "the infinite" amongst (decidedly secular) Romantic artists is quite similar to the conceptualization of the "abyss" proffered by Derrida and the "perfect form" proffered by Plato. Such a connection is made clear a few sentences later, when Berlin notes of Romantic era artists that "This is a secularized version…of that profound religious striving towards being at one with God…which comes to the Germans from Plato, from Eckhart, from Boehme, from German mysticism…except that here it takes a literary and secular form" (105).

For the Romantics, the divine was touchable, shapeable, and immaculate, but simultaneously awe-inspiring. It rendered humanity miniscule, insofar as we could not understand nor contain the inexhaustible forces which manipulate and guide the universe and natural law. If the Enlightenment sought to explain the world, Berlin posits, the "Anti-Enlightenment" of the Romantics sought to position man within the universe as tiny and immaterial. A greater beyond, it claimed, exists in an unknowable state. Although the early Romantics Berlin identifies (Herder, Kant, Hamann, 21-67) sought to associate this immutability with person or geography, this form of Romanticism persisted for almost a hundred years until, followed to its natural terminus, Romanticism exploded into diasporic art forms that sought to explain the human condition itself. Romanticism had, for all intents and purposes, subsumed the role of religion, including a tendency to attempt explanation of the irrational, its reactionism to technological innovation (in particular, the industrial revolution immortalized by authors like Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Blake), and, most importantly, its connection to unembraceable divine-like sublimity.

As an extension of the Anti-Enlightenment, Romantic artists were consumed with a secular representation of the divine. The void, the abyss, the sublime; all had become

replacements for God, divinity, or the soul. This meant that technology which professed to offer mastery over natural states–for them, the industrial revolution, for us, the advent of AI–was not only foolhardy but also secularly immoral. One of Berlin's "unrestrained Romantics" would likely adopt a position similar to Swift in regard to algorithmic communication, decrying it as a pale imitation of the creative process, void of soul, quality, and heart.

This, however, would not be the only critique leveled at ChatGPT, because as Berlin notes when discussing the works of German philosopher Friedrich Schelling, the act of copying, to the Romantics, was not only sinful but impossible:

> There are struggles within nature. Every volcanic eruption, every phenomenon such as magnetism and electricity was interpreted by Schelling as being a struggle for self-assertion on the part of blind mysterious forces, except that in man they became half-conscious. The only works of art, for him, which have any value at all…are those which are similar to nature in conveying the pulsations of a not wholly conscious life…Any work of art which is simply a copy, simply a piece of knowledge, something which, like science, is simply the product of careful observation and then of noting down in scrupulous terms what you have seen…that is death. (98)

This passage discusses some of the most relevant and iconic thought processes behind Romantic art and literature: an emphasis on the sublime, on growth, life, and movement, an incapability of the audience to ever grasp the true meaning of the art, and originality and innovation. Romantics, according to Berlin, themselves ironically imitated Platonic ideals:

> The pulsations of spirit are…pulsations of nature, so that the work of art has the same vitalizing effect upon the man who looks at it or who listens to it as certain phenomena of nature. When this is lacking, when the whole thing is wholly conventional, done according to rules…the product is of necessity elegant, symmetrical and dead. That is the fundamental romantic, anti-Enlightenment doctrine of art…not merely as in the old Platonic theories of divine inspiration and the ecstatic artists…but upon all the doctrines which take an interest in…the work… (99)

The subconscious of man, immutable and unknowable, was to the Romantics roughly equivalent to the divine form described within Plato's philosophy. It is at the heart of all Romantic art, composition or visual. When things are done "according to rules" (99) they are "…dead" (99), and it is difficult, perhaps inconceivable, to grasp a more fully automated, "according to rules" system of composition than algorithmically generated text or art. The bounds of the algorithm, the material and content upon which the system is trained, the database of potential outlying words, phrases, and structures, the blacklist of transgressive or prohibited content or ideas that is outlawed upon such systems; all are done according to rules, sometimes set by the programmer of the algorithm itself, and sometimes selected from a series of potential outcomes by a probability equation or even a random number generator. For Swift, these rules were set by the professor's vocabulary

tablets, the randomization by a group of assistants constantly turning the rods of the machine. All algorithmically generated art is, to the Romantics, "dead." It has no soul, no life, no incomprehensible void at its center which assists in defining the human condition.

The New Romantic period, then, will be supported by a groundswell of anti-AI and anti-algorithmic sentiment stemming from the human psychological tendency to view algorithmic composition as an uncanny doppelganger of psychology, philosophy, and communication. It will promote the ejection of the bot from the institution, if not the job market or even the state. It will label algorithmic generation an affront, and, ultimately, it will generate ill-will against the products of such technology. Procedural communication, it will be stated, will be "anti-communication," a pale imitation, a poor language, an uncanny ghost haunting *traditional*, *proper*, or *human* artistic expression. Ultimately, even before the rejection has subsided, the New Romantic will be forgotten as the next great technological leap forward presents itself to humankind and asks us to choose which new philosophical quandary it represents, and upon which side we will position ourselves.

Those that abide by the Romantic ideal still invest heavily in a quality of art and composition guided by the unknown. Casting aside sciences which examine design, aesthetics, linguistics, psychology, or literature, these critics seek out fine art that "speaks to them," or otherwise demonstrates a quality of which they cannot elaborate or specify, because to do so would be to remove it. It is this individual, the one who premises esteems the human soul within the artwork, who shall originate the New Romantic movement, by necessity placing authenticity over algorithmic, natural over artificial, human over bot, and mystery over clarity.

It is not the aim of this paper to determine the accuracy or morality of this coming schism in art and literary criticism, merely to suggest that such a split is on the fast-approaching horizon. A time in the not-too-distant future will see pedagogical systems separate themselves into the ones that privilege classic or traditional models against those that seek to integrate AI and ML (machine learning) technology. Artists will be lauded not necessarily on the product and the skill inherent within a work, but rather how much passion and soul was poured into it, subjective definitions of both included. A removal of the object (the assessment) from the process (the effort) will take place. This split, I predict, will be the New Romantic movement. Berlin notes powerful philosophical shifts from the onset of the first Romantic, and I similarly predict the same is likely to happen with the New, though with the caveat that such a movement will be comparatively short, as, before long, another technology will encroach and replace the philosophy inspired by the first, and the cycle of debate will begin anew, regardless if we have had time as a species to process the ramifications and outcomes of the previous.

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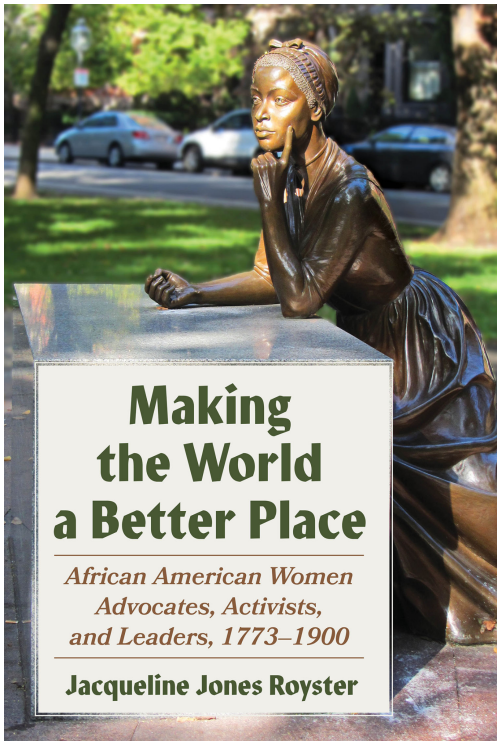
INTERVIEW: JACQUELINE JONES ROYSTER ON BLACK WOMEN'S LIBERATION RHETORICS



After reading *Traces Of A Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women* by Jacqueline Jones Royster for Dr. LaToya Sawyer's graduate seminar on Black Women's Rhetoric, I was inspired to contact Dr. Royster via email and was honored and grateful for her time and gracious responses.

Traces Of A Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women (2000) by Jacqueline Jones Royster is an enlightening book about the struggles, accomplishments, and triumphs of several African American women who used rhetoric to embody the "*Afrafeminist ideology*" [which is to] "speak and interpret *with* community, not just *for* the community, or *about* the community" (275).

Royster richly and effectively details the lives of these women, bringing awareness to their contributions in supporting marginalized African Americans, especially women. They turned their "thoughts toward action in making a better world for us all" (285). Royster's forthcoming book, *Making the World a Better Place: African American Women Advocates, Activists, and Leaders, 1773-1900* continues to center African American Women as critical contributors to the nation-building project.

FS: Your tone in the text is one of optimism. Instead of focusing on tragedy, this book highlights the accomplishments of the women. It seems that you did not want to give much attention to oppressors. Was that deliberate?

Dr. Royster: My deliberate choice is to present the research that I do on women of African descent proactively from their own points of view rather than in response to the way that others position them. They deserve that respect. They are sentient beings with their own

agency. We have the frameworks and tools in rhetorical studies to interrogate their sense of self, agency, voice, purpose, etc., and we have the frameworks and tools to (re)present the discoveries that we make with care and caring. I do take this approach quite deliberately, with a commitment to respecting their lives and living, again, as a proactive and not simply a reactive enterprise. I look and listen for the terms that they articulate for themselves rather than defaulting their experiences and contributions by the terms and measures of others. From my point of view, what I do as a researcher and scholar is not so much "optimistic" as it is "realistic"—with an effort to see what is there and not there from their perspectives and what's going on in a multi-dimensional way. In other words, point of view matters**.**

FS: **You speak of the *elite* among Black women. These women represented and spoke for various marginalized groups of Black women in their time. (i) Who, currently, do you think possesses that kind of platform? (ii) What do think of the current rhetoric of Black women, for example, who is representative of Black women today: Cardi B, Michelle Obama, Meghan Markel?**

Dr. Royster: Essentially, I link "eliteness" to status within their own communities, to the operational cultures of the arenas of action, and to the women's capacity within these intersecting spaces to engage in action. Compared to the general scope of African American women in the nineteenth century, the women that I highlighted in *Traces Of A Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women* had to some degree privileges that they used to good effect. With the early generations of African American women, the question is who among a fairly diverse group of women had the privilege of doing something in some way with the expectation of making a difference—impact, consequence. So, I don't really see the women as "speaking for" others as able to speak their lives and visions eloquently with courage and to do things with the resources that were available to them (human, educational, financial, whatever) that offer benefits for themselves—but not just for themselves. They exhibited quite persistently a sense of social and ethical responsibility.

I believe that women of African descent remain strategic problem-posers and solvers within a complex ecosystem. They have exhibited, and continue to do so, rhetorical expertise with both courage and compassion in standing up, speaking up, and doing the work that they feel compelled to do no matter what with a sense of urgency, social responsibility, and ethical responsibility—again with benefits available, not only for themselves but for others. The women you list above all have a public presence and deserve respect for the work that they seem to be doing competently and well. I have been most impressed, however, with some other contemporary African American women for being willing to step up, as their forebears did under different conditions, to engage in complex tasks—again against incredible odds. People who are drawing my attention include, for example: Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, District Attorney Fani Willis, Attorney General of NY Letitia James, writer and academic Nikole Hannah-Jones, and the long list of African American mothers who are working relentlessly to bring accountability for their

children whose lives have been taken in acts of outrageous and incomprehensible violence.

So, my attention is obviously directed toward the interrogation of the ways and means of our democracy. There are women, obviously, in other arenas that are doing distinctive work in the world. In fact, what brings me a deep sense of affirmation as an African American woman myself is that there are really so many African American women who are doing incredible work that I can't possibly focus on all of them. So, I choose those who these days are really helping me to think well about what it means to live in a nation that declares itself to be deliberately democratic.

FS: Looking back, is there anything you wish you had added / left out?

Dr. Royster: Well, *Traces Of A Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women* was published almost 25 years ago. Fortunately, my work continued. So, I feel compelled to emphasize that I knew when *Traces* was published that just one book could not possibly capture fully the history, potential, excellence, or anything else of women of African descent. I didn't even imagine that I was saying all that needed to be said in *Traces* about African American women and their uses of literacy. I also never imagined that my knowledge and understanding of African American women's lives and work was over and done with the completion of this one book. What I imagined instead is that my work was only beginning, that I would continue to learn, that I would get even better at articulating my perspectives and insights, and that I would be able to refine and hone my methodologies in ways that might be helpful to others in doing the sort of research and scholarship that I have found to be so compelling. The good news, of course, is that I have not been disappointed. I have been kept pretty busy and infinitely engaged. I continue to be. There is just so much that we might do, that we might think about.

FS: Given the depth of the accomplishments of the women you speak about, I am curious as to why you chose to use the title "Traces of a Stream**" rather than "Traces of a** River?**"**

Dr. Royster: Well, beyond the fact that, aesthetically, I like the sound of "Traces of a Stream" a whole lot better than "Traces of a River," I have always been interested in scientific discovery and especially our discoveries of the distant past that we have been able to recover through our growing scientific and technological knowledge.

During the 1990s when I was working in a focused way on *Traces*, scientists and archaeologists were finding—by looking back from space to the Earth—the traces of rivers, streams, and ever-flowing waterways, as well as cities and civilizations that no longer exist on the surface of our planet—but once did. I found the image of such processes to be compelling and evocative. The connection that I made with my own work is that what I was seeing in trickles about the long history of engagement and excellence among African American women as language users was literally just the slightly visible evidence at that

time of the much more that existed—past and present—and that could be maximized with more impact and consequence going forward—knowledge that I found inspiring and that might be so for others as well.

My passion was to show that rhetorical studies might perform the service in knowledge-making and knowledge-using that science and technology were doing geologically for our knowledge of the Earth. I wanted to use my training in linguistics, rhetorical studies, and cultural studies to bring visibility, audibility, and intelligibility (as my new volume—to be published this spring— declares) to this under-documented and under-appreciated group. In effect, I presumed that value and worthiness existed and that the women deserve to be respected and appreciated. I believed that the traces of a stream that I was seeing for African American women's advocacy, activism, and leadership as agents of change was a powerful indication that we ought to know that there is so much more that we have not noticed, that we have not seen, that we have not appreciated, that we might be benefitting from if we had the will and the knowledge to do so.

FS: Thank you for your time and response. *Making the World a Better Place: African American Women Advocates, Activists, and Leaders, 1773-1900* is available for pre-order now. I highly recommend it to scholars of rhetoric, American studies, liberation studies, and those interested in understanding the role African American women have played in shaping America.

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PLACEMAKING AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF GEOCRITICISM: AN INTERVIEW WITH BERTRAND WESTPHAL

INTRODUCTION

As placemaking efforts proliferate across the United States (and the world, with the efforts of the Project for Public Spaces and PlacemakingX to create intentionally designed, people-oriented places in cities from Mexico City to Parramatta and the Creative Placemaking of the National Endowment for the Arts), it is increasingly important to develop a hybrid, critical, humanities-based framework through which to evaluate the spaces at-hand. Geocriticism, a literary theory founded upon the belief that space is at least in part discursively constructed, is uniquely suited for the task. As the founder of the field, Professor Westphal gestures toward possible applications and limitations of these efforts through this interview.

Bertrand Westphal is Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Limoges, France. His publications include *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* (trans. 2011), *A Plausible World* (trans. 2013), *La cage des méridiens. Le roman et l'art contemporain face à la globalisation* (2016), *Atlas des égarements. Études géocritiques* (2019), and *L'Infini Culturel. Théorie littéraire et fragilité du divers* (2022). Founder of geocriticism, he specializes in world literature, postmodernism, and the interplay of art and literary cartographies.

MS: I would like to explore with you some possible ways that the geocritical method may be used to inform (or subvert/complicate) public placemaking and/or the burgeoning field of public humanities. Placemaking—as a discipline that combines urban design, public management of the built environment, architecture, and grassroots, community-led programming—pulls from Kevin Lynch, Holly Whyte, Jane Jacobs, and Yi-Fu Tuan, among others, to intentionally develop and increase the usage and vibrancy of public spaces. Could geocriticism be used to develop, evaluate, or critique such places?

Professor Westphal: To tell the truth, I discovered this emerging discipline thanks to your question, but I think that I understood, through the details you gave, what its distinctive features are. It would be about considering a form of humanism, an interdisciplinary one, like any humanism worthy of the name. It would bring together the study of theories and practices that promote the cultural relationship between individuals and communities from a public policy perspective on the one hand and the urban environment on the other. Because of its interdisciplinary basis, such an initiative seems very stimulating, especially since it proposes a holistic challenge, namely to take into account and "creolize" all the activities sharing the common objective. Moreover, it gives the impression of promoting something that has always been close to my heart: the anchoring of cultural life and its assumed fictions in a concrete, material dimension of society.

If, more than four decades ago, the physicist Ilya Prigogine and the philosopher Isabelle Stengers called for a "new alliance" between the hard sciences and the humanities, we are now witnessing the concretization of a new alliance between open approaches to reality to the world of fiction and approaches to fiction compatible with reality. In short, we are witnessing the reduction of several fractures resulting from a somewhat too rigid positivism which has conditioned our societies for a very long time. By the way, let me add that I really like your idea of "vibrancy of public spaces." This formula goes in the direction of another metaphor, which is "polyphony." However, it indicates something more discreet, more intimate: the city vibrates, and in doing so, it makes the individual vibrate. Now, we need 'pickin' up good vibrations,' as understood by a group from the Sixties who nevertheless preferred the beaches to the city!

What could geocriticism represent in such an epistemological context? It's not perforce for me to say, especially since I just confessed that I don't know all the basics of public placemaking. My idea has always been that we freely use the tools of geocriticism, as and when needed... if necessary! But, since you have asked me the question, I will try to put forward some answers that come to mind spontaneously.

I note to begin with that the references mentioned refer alternately to American classics of urban planning and architecture (Kevin Lynch, Holly Whyte, Jane Jacobs) or cultural geography (Yi-Fu Tuan). At the same time, and I sincerely thank you for it, you have consulted me, though I am a literature scholar, basically. In an interdisciplinary, even intermedial perspective, it would indeed be a shame to leave aside the methodologies closer to fictional universes, whether literary, artistic, film, choreographic or other. In reference to what we said a few moments ago, the 'creolization,' the 'polyphony' or the 'rhythmic vibration' that the placemaking public claims should go in the direction of an authentic pooling of knowledge and practices, even if these practices are inspired by fictions. In addition, it goes without saying that the methodology would benefit from drawing inspiration from international sources.

I believe that balanced, fair interactions on a planetary scale should preside over any

form of contemporary humanism. In my opinion, traditional universalism—that which European modernity has conveyed for centuries—no longer has any meaning in today's world as it is too Eurocentric and, therefore, it holds very little legitimacy. A true new humanism should promote a bottom-up planetarization, beyond any 'Western' hegemonic manifestation. Wherever we consider public placemaking, even at the most local level, I have the feeling that a macroscopic vision deserves to be integrated into the reasoning. Of course, this does not mean the promotion of a uniform global or even a flatly globalized version, but conscious, lucid choices, declined, each time, in an original and different way – and this originality would feed itself in the light of our cultural planet, of what our whole planet can offer and not just a small portion. Some would no doubt consider this to be an empty utopia. Who knows! In any case, from utopias sometimes some good ideas remain, but from triumphant pessimism there is never anything left, except bitterness.

You noticed that public placemaking is likely to be subverted or complicated. From what I detect in your comment, I think so too, because obviously it establishes a link between public space, the political norm and a cultural layout. Inevitably, this leads to proximities which on occasion can be problematic. If the public authority is intended to promote culture in the urban space, I think it would be harmful for it to exercise a sort of right of scrutiny over what is happening in the street, over what is specific to the street and which manifests itself through emergence, spontaneity and not necessarily through codification and therefore, whether we like it or not, surveillance. In a geocritical vocabulary, I would like to say that the public placemaking should not, by dint of oriented convergences or the desire to harmonize practices, impose the vision of a place where art is associated to a space, to an area of open and largely random creativity. Of course, this intersection often corresponds to an area of turbulence and its careful observation is at the heart of the geocritical enterprise.

MS: I too think the "right of scrutiny" is something about which to be cautious. It seems like any reading or criticism put into practice this way would end up proscriptive. That is, hindering, as you put it, the creative emergence and/or spontaneity of a place. Could the geocritical tenet of stratigraphy, as you have laid out, help keep this tendency at bay? In other words, perhaps concerted efforts to understand or archive or delimit the particular place as one that is comprised of layers of meaning and de/re-territorialized space might preempt or anticipate the attempt to codify it.

Professor Westphal: This question is indeed central. I have often relied on Deleuze and Guattari to address the fluid nature of cultural and/or literary representations. Here, if we pursue the reflection, it is Michel Foucault, another great inspiration of the spatial turn, who could be summoned. I am of course referring to *Discipline and Punish*, whose original title is *Surveiller et punir*, where the philosopher describes the principle of the panopticon. In short, yes, the street, and more generally the public space, should not be transformed into a sort of cultural panopticon. Can we avoid it? I dare to hope so! To

begin with, it is up to the public authorities to deliberately avoid giving themselves too much space in the context of urban culture. If they claimed to occupy all the ground, to overpower it, so to say, one would have to wonder about what remains of democracy and freedom of expression in this given place. This is a very serious issue. From a more theoretical angle, we will certainly note that wherever different layers of meaning coexist openly this tends to demonstrate that public *placemaking* is not governed by a uniform and hierarchical public *pacemaking*.

A very concrete example is provided by street art, which fascinates me. While it was illegal in its early days, in the era of graffiti, tagging and writing, street art has become a major form of artistic expression today. Artists who had ended up in the police station not so long ago now find themselves in contemporary art museums! Which is reassuring in itself, but which casts a doubt: obviously, the police station is in no way their place, but is the museum really? Isn't there an attempt or at least a temptation to institutionally recover what was totally spontaneous? The subject becomes even more complex when the town halls intervene to promote street art, and, by doing so, provide it an official vocation. I happen to stay in the thirteenth arrondissement of Paris, where street art is promoted by the arrondissement town hall, which works with a specialized art gallery: the idea is to bring the museum to the street. The initiative is undoubtedly excellent; you can clearly see the spectacular walls, made by artists from around the world (Tristan Eaton, Inti, Seth, etc.), from the aerial metro, for example.

But what remains of the spontaneity of the artistic gesture, of a gesture as radically free as that of a graffiti artist? In this context, censorship and self-censorship are never far apart. Fortunately, not far from the prestigious walls, lesser-rated artists continue their interventions and more modest galleries support them. For the record, I would like to point out that Hyuro, an Argentinian street artist active in Valencia, Spain, where she died prematurely in November 2020, dedicated a superb wall to Jane Jacobs, whom you mentioned earlier. With a view to public placemaking, it goes without saying that a reflection on street art, on the text and the image that it circulates, spontaneously - or not - seems to me more than opportune, especially when discussing the stratigrafic issue. The street art turnover is very quick and conveys a perfect idea of how a city changes; it is a shortcut, in a way.

MS: Towards the end of *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* [of which I am citing Prof. Robert Tally's translation], you describe how spaces are "intertextual" and how the geocritic must be comfortable oscillating between geographies of the "real" and "imaginary." What happens in "real" spaces with fewer "imaginary" texts to be read alongside it? Or is this just a failure of imagining what constitutes a text? E.g., in placemaking, community input and storytelling are features meant to contribute to the place. Are these fruitful texts with which to undertake a multifocal analysis? Do you foresee any difficulties or challenges here?

Professor Westphal: Answering your question is not self-evident for me, because it is a bit as if I had to consider several successive phases of what, in my eyes, constitutes geocriticism. At first, most of my thinking focused on literature; in the academic field, I am after all a literature scholar, even if this scholar is a "comparatist" and that the "comparatists" should be used crossing the limits. At the very beginning, my analyses included excursus on the side of cinema or photography. In a way, I needed support that reinforced the effect of reality, *l'effet de réel*. The corpus is thereby *ipso facto* limited. I have come back to this point several times. I mentioned a 'representativity threshold,' for example. This means that it would not be wise to envisage a geocritical portrait of a given place from too restricted a corpus.

If we take the reasoning in the other direction, we could estimate that the larger the corpus, the less the stereotyped vision that such and such an author can convey will have weight. It will be relativized by the contributions of other books or other films, and the general representation will be more complex. It will become richer, the synthesis more fruitful. It should nevertheless not be forgotten that New York is not Santa Lucia di Siniscola, in Sardinia, an example that I sometimes mention when the question of the corpus arises. It's not all about demographics or size. Also emerges the question of "literary density," so to speak: Santa Lucia di Siniscola, which is on the beach of Siniscola, in the province of Nuoro, today has less than two hundred inhabitants. However, the watchtower overlooking this place has been described by several travelers and sometimes in a contradictory way, if we stick to topographical criteria rooted in 'real life.'

Among these writers were André Pieyre de Mandiargues and Albert t'Serstevens. Was this tower round or square? Was there one or two? Since a quarter of a century, our access to knowledge has been simplified: all you have to do is 'google' to come across images of places, which would allow us to get a more precise idea. Such was not the case when the two authors I have just quoted were writing. The distance from reality was easier to stage. It is as if there were then more margin for the suspension of disbelief. Technological progress has given more weight to the real, apparently to the detriment of the imaginary. If I remember correctly, James Frey lost a lawsuit for altering the realemes of what he passed off as an autobiography. He had erased the boundaries between the literal and the literary. For some, there was a breach of the implicit reading contract, false advertising! Would it then have been necessary to condemn Pieyre de Mandiargues because he had made the tower of Santa Lucia a square construction, whereas it was undeniably round? Should he have been locked up in this round tower because he had written that it was square? In short, what is literature? It seems that Jean-Paul Sartre's questioning remains relevant and that answering it is still just as complicated, if not more.

For my part, I had resolutely placed myself in the wake of postmodernism. I really enjoyed *Postmodernist Fiction*, Brian McHale's first essay. If today postmodernism seems to be over (but that is another debate), its approach had helped the young scholar

that I was in the 90s to come out of a 'French-style' structuralism, for which the real had no place in a fictional setting. The famous *textolatry* denounced by Thomas Pavel! As for me, when conceiving what I meant by geocriticism, I never thought of a clear split, a fracture, between reality and fiction. Ultimately, why wouldn't surrealism tell us as much about reality – but in its own way – as naturalism? My passage through English-language theory and criticism were therefore of great help, because they were much less formalistic and, via the backing up of minority discourse, in tune with contemporary society, its 'reality.'

Since that time, which *Geocriticism*, the essay published by Minuit in 2007 and translated in 2011 for Palgrave Macmillan by Robert Tally synthesized, the discourse has evolved in the direction of a greater intermedial attention. You ask an extremely judicious question: 'Or is this just a failure of imagining what constitutes a text?'... As long as we are content with the text traditionally perceived in its scriptural dimension, the answer is: yes. But the story of the place is not confined to the written word. It also arises from the oral and the iconic/iconological, as semiotics had already shown, but once again from a very formalist angle, too much, for my taste. This intermedial opening was first provoked by the connection, which seemed to me more than legitimate, between literature and artistic cartography (installations, painting, engraving, etc.), a theme whose impact is major in the field of contemporary plastic arts. I studied it in two essays published by Editions de Minuit: *La cage des méridiens*, in 2016, then in *Atlas des égarements*, in 2019.

Since 2018, I have not stopped thinking about the role of street art in our perception of urban and sometimes rural spaces. With a view to public placemaking, it goes without saying that a reflection on street art, on the text and the image that it circulates, spontaneously - or not (the institution often uses it to convey messages) – seems to me more than opportune. As far as I am concerned, I have just published in December 2022 at Brill an essay where the link between literature, street art and cultural infinity is omnipresent. The essay is titled *L'Infini culturel. Théorie littéraire et fragilité du divers* [Cultural Infinity. Literary theory and the fragility of diversity]. By the way, if I may allow myself a remark, I regret that these last essays are not translated into English because they give a more recent and perhaps broader vision of what geocriticism can bring, in particular in its apprehension of public space.

MS: In an earlier interview [Conkan, Marius, Modoc, Emanuel. "Literature Helps Worlding the World – A Conversation with Bertrand Westphal." Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory 6.1 (2020)], you acknowledge the "aporie" that arises when selecting the literary corpus as part of a multifocal reading and the subjectivity of choosing these texts. You seem to indicate that one way forward would be to keep in mind that "il faudrait à tout le moins spécialiser le focus" [the "focus [on space] should at least be specialized," interviewer's translation] and perhaps not taken up for entire large cities like New York or Buenos Aires. How

granular could a space be to still beget a fruitful geocritical analysis? Is there a threshold where a place becomes too large or too small for geocriticism?

Professor Westphal: That's kind of what we were talking about just now. I had also mentioned the case of Santa Lucia during this interview with our Romanian colleagues. In short, we come back to what I called the "threshold of representativeness," or, as you say, the degree of "granularity" of the place taken into consideration. Can we define it? Can we quantify it? Can we decide what is too big or too small to lend itself to a geocritical study? I don't think so, because we are evolving within a literary framework and above all we are calling on the methodologies of the human sciences, and not those of the supposedly exact sciences, whose non-Euclidean geometry has moreover clearly shown that they were not as exact as they believed to be at the peak of positivism. If we leave aside the exact sciences, we realize that the problem of the threshold is typically the one that the human sciences have to face. When does a survey or a poll acquire legitimacy? Sociologists constantly ask themselves this question and try to provide a methodological answer. Do they succeed?

I remember reading a paragraph where Robert Tally regretted the "fuzziness" of geocriticism about the corpus matter - it is not exactly the term he used, but in essence this is what he wanted to point out. He was both right and wrong, in my opinion. Right, because it is impossible to mathematically quantify a threshold of this kind. Wrong, because it is not of decisive importance, on the contrary. Let me explain. Why, in fact, should a quantified limit be set from which the analysis would be based? Besides the fact that the "why" would implicitly refer to the delicate methodological "how", it seems to me that the challenge of literary studies does not necessarily consist in attributing this kind of mission to itself. If they are not part of the hard sciences, they are not part of the human sciences either, in any case not in the same way as human geography or sociology, for example. They have their specificity. They precisely explore the interval between reality and fiction, the joining of the two or their entanglement since in a certain way there is no real duality, fiction being encompassed in the real, in the immeasurable real and therefore in life. If I weren't afraid to pass for an inveterate post-postmodern, I would say that literary studies have the task of exploring a kind of mindscape shaped in a thirdspace, the one where a Moebius strip symbolizes the non-exclusive interaction between reality and fiction.

The question of quantification only arises when geocriticism is granted the scope of a human science. Let's say that in the field of literary theory, it is one of the approaches that is closest to geography, urban planning, etc., but it remains a literary theory nonetheless. Therefore, instead of limiting ourselves to determining an illusory numerical threshold, I would say that we just must avoid feeding the stereotype ourselves by seeking truths in too small corpuses. It is more of a general principle than a formula. It seems to me that it emerges all by itself in practice, in an almost empirical way, as long as we manage to limit our own ethnocentric drifts and to approach representations in their multifocal nature. For my part, in recent years, I have constantly

opened the focus, in the direction of the macroscopic, which has led me to a criticism of world literature when it forgets to question its ethnocentrism, as have been noted by some specialists in postcolonial studies. In the context of planetarism, the question of the corpora no longer arises in a quantitative way, because we are in any case confronted with a form of infinity. There, the problem is how to approach what, by its mass, exceeds the intellective faculties of a single individual. More and more often, I tell myself that the key word is humility. Socrates was definitely right: we end up knowing that we know nothing!

It is obvious that we will not make a geocriticism of New York starting from two, five or twenty novels or films. In any case, the objective will not be to establish a definitive or even provisional truth. It is ultimately a question of showing how the particular approach of such and such a writer is articulated around a larger whole. This can be completely banal, stereotyped...or perfectly original. Think of Kafka's New York! Geocriticism makes it possible to coordinate heterogeneous texts in their differences and similarities. It can certainly provide a series of lessons in the context of public place-making, but it will not serve to feed it, from, how to say, a utilitarian angle.

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In her most recent piece entitled, "Rethinking Gaston Bachelard's Space as a Social Construct in the Postmodern Era," Jessica explores new approaches to understanding and conceptualizing Bachelard's 1958 publication The Poetics of Space, by applying the works of noted scholars Hortense Spillers and Lisa Lowe. By merging such different theoretical frameworks, histories and perspectives, Jessica hopes to shed new light on Bachelard's imaginative and psychological examination of the spaces we dwell in and the relationship between inhabitant and physical space.

RETHINKING GASTON BACHELARD'S *SPACE* AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT IN THE POSTMODERN ERA

> Space there was none for me in my bedroom (mine in name only) at Balbec; it was full of things which did not know me, which flung back at me the distrustful glance I cast at them, and, without taking any heed of my existence, showed that I was interrupting the humdrum course of theirs – Marcel Proust, *Within A Budding Grove*

The 1958 publication of French philosopher Gaston Bachelard's *La Poétique de l'Espace* (*The Poetics of Space*), first published in English in 1964, remains one of the most imaginative in its explorations of the home. Using a phenomenological approach in his study of the home, Bachelard weaves together science and aesthetics, resulting in a poetic and psychological examination of lived experiences in intimate spaces. Bachelard theorized that a house is more than simply a geometric object, but rather a thing capable of transformation through occupancy. He believed that once a house is inhabited, this act of occupancy transforms the geometrical object into something humanesque. Humanization of the physical object occurs through a type of unseen energy that *awakens* the live-in space. The expectations that people place on a home (expectations of safety, shelter, enjoyment, etc.) coupled with projected fantasies transfer onto the occupied space. As a result, the live-in space reciprocates by arousing memory and sentiment in the inhabitants' mind. As such, "It seems to be well established that physical space has no 'reality' without the energy that is deployed within it" (Lefebvre 13). Bachelard's notion of affected space aligns imagination with morality. The home, according to Bachelard, is the

first place that an individual comes to know intimately and, therefore, the home acts as a springboard for humanities values or "human virtue" (Bachelard 44). These inhabited spaces imprint themselves onto those who occupy it, informing ones' memories, associations, and experiences. In other words, the home itself becomes a personified object of virtue. According to Bachelard:

> In this dynamic rivalry between house and universe, we are far removed from any reference to simple geometric forms. A house that has been experienced is not an inert box. Inhabited space transcends geometrical space...For, in point of fact, a house is first and foremost a geometrical object, one which we are tempted to analyze rationally. Its prime reality is visible and tangible, made of well hewn solids and well fitted framework. It is dominated by straight lines...A geometrical object of this kind ought to resist metaphors that welcome the human body and the human soul. But transposition to the human plane takes place immediately whenever a house is considered as space for cheer and intimacy, space that is supposed to condense and defend intimacy. (48)

Delving further into the home, Bachelard narrows his examination to *objects*, where wardrobes, desks, and chests, become prime examples of intimacy and psychological secrecy. Bachelard notes, "the real wardrobe is not an everyday piece of furniture. It is not opened every day, and so, like a heart that confides in no one, the key is not on the door" (79). Accordingly, the existence of the lock becomes just as significant as the lack of a key. To disturb either the lock or key would be a gross violation of personal and psychological secrecy.

Much of the concepts in *Space* are greatly influenced by structuralist thinkers like philosopher Ferdinand de Saussure and anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss. For the structuralist thinker, the connection between things is not a result of a *direct* connection. The connection between things is rather a provisional connection due to the arbitrary ways that the connections themselves are formed and are made in the first place. The established connection between things also implies an act of comparison to other objects in order to ascertain relations of difference. As a result, it is impossible to determine the origin of how these relationships or ideas originally developed. It is understood, rather, that these connections between things emerged out of other adjacent ideas. Bachelard's rationale in *Space* builds on these structuralist ideals by adapting Levi-Strauss's idea of the existence of a universal law, whereby people engage in similar patterns of thinking, social practices, and utilization of social spaces and objects. The universalization of the home and objects in *Space*, however, heavily points to a broad generalization on Bachelard's end, suggesting that his idea of a home is a predominantly Western one. There is also little to no acknowledgment in how varying cultural, national, ethnic backgrounds or gendered differences might change the ways in which individuals interact, perceive, or identify with intimate lived-in spaces and objects. Delving further into Bachelard's analysis, it is evident that he does not take into consideration those who live outside the margins of society.

Although Bachelard offers a new and unique perspective on the house-occupant relationship, his approach leaves us to wonder, who is left out of these spaces, and how do intimate spaces transform when occurrences of dehumanization transpire? The house, Bachelard positions, is the first world that an individual comes to know intimately, and, therefore, the home becomes a starting point for humanities values. This is the first argument that Bachelard makes in error. Bachelard approaches the subject of the house, object, and occupant with a linear perspective. As a result, his understanding of these subjects takes on a universal approach, in which conclusions are produced as a result of mass generalizations about the ways in which *certain* individuals live. The implications of such structuralist ways of thinking are that *things* cannot be considered self-contained or independent. Objects are viewed through a system in which the ways it connects or does not connect to other objects, language, or things will essentially alter how the object or thing is perceived. Hortense Spillers builds on this idea by placing herself and people of color at the center of this philosophy. In her essay, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," Spillers identifies herself as a woman of color, but she recognizes that in terms of American rhetoric, she is also labeled by other names too. Spillers explains:

> Not everybody knows my name. 'Peaches' and 'Brown Sugar,' 'Sapphire' and 'Earth Mother,' 'Aunty'...or 'Black Woman at the Podium': I describe a locus of confounded identities...the names by which I am called in the public place render an example of signifying property *plus*. In order for me to speak a truer word concerning myself, I must strip down through layers of attenuated meanings, made an excess in time; over time, assigned by a particular historical order. (Spillers 203)

The relationship between the signifier and signified is arbitrary, since there is no direct connection between the words used to describe something and the thing that is actually being described. In Spillers case, the names that she is called take shape because American society has placed meaning on them. In other words, Spillers' physical image as a woman of color (signifier) is what American society sees, and how America interprets what it sees is conveyed using arbitrary words which are assigned meanings; to use Spillers' example, "Brown Sugar."

Spiller's examination of objects, people, and language forces the question, what are the larger structures at play that allow for these elements to connect or not connect to each other in particular ways? Her investigation moves from the allusive language used to identify black women in America to the enslaved body. In her discussion of the "captive body" Spillers states:

> The captivating party does not only earn the right to dispose of the captive body as it sees fit, but gains, consequently, the right to name and 'name' it...The nicknames by which African-American women have been called, or regarded, or imagined on the New World scene...demonstrate the powers of distortion that the dominant community seizes as its unlawful

> prerogative…Moynihan's *Negro Family*, then, borrows its narrative energies from the grid of associations, from the semantic and iconic folds buried deep in the collective past, that come to surround and signify the captive. (210)

Spillers recognizes that the enslaved captives did not have autonomy or control over any part of their personal being, including their own names. The words and names initially applied to the captives, though arbitrary at first, came to be recognized and understood by the dominant society and, overtime, these meanings were solidified into societies' consciousness. Bachelard argues that an individual will always remember and carry with them the memories, associations and emotional connections that were created and formed within his or her very first home. Usually, this first home is the individual's childhood home, where his or her earliest memories and imaginations were shaped. It is within these established connections that the past, present and future are all connected; such that, a person carries memories of past experiences of his or her first home into each new house he or she occupies. By doing this, the person creates expectations for his or her new home, hoping to maintain a similar emotional connection that was established with the very first home. Spillers rejects this rationale in her discussion of the enslaved body. She states:

> Domesticity appears to gain its power by way of a common origin of cultural fictions that are grounded in the specificity of proper names, more exactly, a patronymic, which, in turn, situates those subjects that it covers in a particular place. Contrarily, the cargo ship might not be regarded as elements of the domestic, even though the vessel that carries the cargo is sometimes romantically personified as 'she.' The human cargo of a slave vessel–in the effacement and remission of African family and proper names–contravenes notions of the domestic. (214)

Public and private spaces are privileged spaces which are enjoyed only by the liberated body. The enslaved or captive body has no conception of public or private space, because it is not a privilege that they are allowed to have. Bachelard's assumption of a universal way of living, such that men and women are raised in houses, not only emphasizes the point that he is speaking about certain people–mainly middle and upper class, predominately white, Westerners–but also that he is excluding other races, ethnicities, cultures, and histories from the conversation.

Working with his assumption of a universal way of living, Bachelard extends his rationale by claiming that once a connection is formed between the occupant and his or her home, the occupant can then start to daydream and imagine a future within the house, building an identity. The question becomes, what sort of 'identity' could an enslaved body generate? According to Spillers, "The point remains that captives were forced into patterns of dispersal, beginning with the Trade itself, into *the horizontal* relatedness of language groups, discourse formations, bloodlines, names, and properties by the legal arrangements of enslavement" (219). An individual who is considered and treated as

'property' under the law, and who maintains no public or private space of their own, would be severely limited in carving out an identity that was built around more than a connection to inanimate objects. Additionally, part of Bachelard's argument concerning the building of identity revolved around the idea of family. The notion of family, however, becomes problematic when the discourse includes the enslaved body:

> ...where 'kinship' loses meaning, *since it can be invaded at any given and arbitrary moment by the property relations*...It seems clear, however, that 'family,' as we practice and understand it 'in the West'–the vertical transfer of a bloodline, of a patronymic, of titles and entitlements, of real estate and the prerogatives of 'cold cash,' from fathers to sons and in the supposedly free exchange of affectional ties between a male and female of his choice–becomes the mythically revered privilege of a free and freed community. (218)

The concept of having, maintaining, or raising a family is a privilege that is only granted to the liberated body. The enslaved body, so long as they are considered property, is both legally and physically incapable of having a family in the traditional, Western sense of the term. Any offspring produced by an enslaved body is also considered property and, therefore, can be distributed however the owner or master of the property chooses. Under the conditions of enslavement, there can be no normal sense of 'family,' 'gender,' or 'sexuality,' for the captive body. The idea of the 'family' remains in the realm of the Western, heteronormative temporality, from which the black body is excluded from. The enslaved body functions in a state of black temporality, in which the individual is denied futurity through subjugation and violence.

Reading through Bachelard's idea of an occupant *awakening* a space, what happens if we expand the idea of the *intimate* lived-in space? Who determines what an intimate lived-in space looks like? How do Bachelard's theories apply if we include enslaved bodies and dehumanizing spaces into the conversation? Would Bachelard's theory of unseen energy in lived-in space still apply? According to Bachelard's rationale, it is an individual's *identity* which is not only created and molded by their lived-in space, but it is also the main factor in transforming other lived-in-spaces; (i.e., moving into a new house.) Spillers associates gender with individual identity:

> I would suggest that 'gendering' takes place within the confines of the domestic, an essential metaphor that then spreads its tentacles for male and female subjects over a wider ground of human and social purposes...We might say that the slave ship, its crew, and its human-as-cargo stand for a wild and unclaimed richness of *possibility* that is not interrupted, not counted/accounted, or differentiated, until its movement gains the land thousands of miles away from the point of departure. Under these conditions, one is neither female, nor male, as both subjects are taken into account as *quantities*. (215)

The enslaved body has no gender. In order for gender to be linked to oppression, an individual must have a liberated body. The enslaved body is regarded as property, and as a result of this labeling, the body is essentially stripped of its gender. If an enslaved body is considered property, has no gender, and lives outside the normative temporality, then an identity cannot properly form. Without identity formation, this mysterious energy transfer into the surrounding environment cannot be fully enacted. The environment, according to Bachelard's theory, would essentially *read* whoever is occupying the space. To say that an enslaved body has no identity *at all* would belittle the suffering that is well-documented by those who endured slavery and captivity. It would also be neglectful not to acknowledge the spaces of personal and communal joy that enslaved peoples actively created, carving out moments and spaces of love, song, and hope. The duality of enslaved peoples' lived experiences begs the question, how might such experiences complicate or alter the ways in which we think about space? Working with Bachelard's theory that occupants impact their surrounding spaces, and understanding that subjugation and suffering cannot be extricated from enslaved people's daily lived experiences, suggest spaces that, energetically, continuously clash. Creating spaces that not only echo and reflect the suffering, misery, and degradation of its occupants, but also triumphant moments of joy. Perhaps it is this inverted process – broken, reshaped, or unformed identities – that create haunted spaces?

By the time Gaston Bachelard was writing *Space,* the interior of Frances's homes had undergone dramatic changes. In *Intimacies of Four Continents*, Lisa Lowe asserts that the British East India Company's colonial trades has been directly linked to: The United States' Southern slave labor, the Asian textile design and production, and the East India and China trades that would lead to the rise of the British "free trade imperialism." With the British Atlantic slave system in decline by the 18th century, England had turned their attention to Asia; specifically, dealing with China and India. As a result, colonial trade between both countries saw the importation of items like tea, cotton, silk, opium, chintz, etc., as well as Chinese labor workers. Due to Europe's engagement in the slave trade and the East India Company's transport of people and goods into Europe, by the nineteenth-century countries like France had furnished and decorated their homes with an immense array of foreign goods.

Through objects such as wardrobes, desks, and chests we can extrapolate who may have owned these, and the ways in which these objects would have been used. In *Space*, the objects that Bachelard refers to is suggestive of features of the middle-and-upper class Western home. Although we are not necessarily introduced to imported objects inside the home, the paradox of the foreign object having been integrated into the intimate (Western) interior remains present. In France, "the fortunes created by the slavery-based societies in the Americas gave rise to the French bourgeoisie" (Lowe 1). Bachelard does not take these histories into account when discussing–what can be assumed–is a European or French individual's home. One suggestion for Bachelard's negation of this issue could be due to the fact that by the twentieth-century, at the time he was writing *Space*, Europe had been appropriating and adorning themselves in imported goods from China, India and

Africa for so long, that after centuries of trade and exploitation, these objects had become mistaken for commonplace. Overtime, this form of colonial commodification also resulted in the formation of new rituals for those in Europe. Lowe explains that:

> drinking tea had shifted from an expensive luxury reserved for the affluent…had become thoroughly socialized in the space of middle-class households…Yet the colonial relations on which the 'English' ritual depended –sugar from the West Indies, tea and china service imported from China, tables made of hardwoods from the West Indies, splendid dresses made of Indian cottons–these are subordinated as drinking tea becomes the quintessentially 'English' custom (Lowe 82).

It is the exploited labor of these colonial countries that is not only literally furnishing the upper- and middle-class European societies, but has also transformed the fashions, tastes and material culture of those societies. As a result, objects such as silks, chintz, porcelain, and muslin become fetishized as demand for them increases.

The psychology that Bachelard proposes regarding an occupant's treatment or use of an object, as being an indication of an individual's moral character, is suggestive of these learned rituals that Lowe describes such as English tea-drinking. In his discussion of objects and their proper uses, Bachelard alludes to the idea of something *unseen*. Lowe would interpret his vague connections to objects, with learned European rituals, as being an "analogy between the operations of *metaphor* and the process of exchange" (Lowe 97). In other words, Bachelard's ambiguous connections when unraveled, reveal hidden networks of reality in which establishments like the British East India Company, the slave trade, and England's exploitation of the 'free trade' market, all connect to their ability to obtain and appropriate material goods like chintz, porcelain, muslin, etc., such that these material goods not only become fetishized colonial commodities in Europe, but also become ritualized practices.

At the heart of *Space*, Bachelard's work is groundbreaking in its utilization of physical space, psychology and aesthetics to understand how people engage with their surroundings and how our perceptions of these environments shape our imaginations, memories and dreams. Bachelard provides a unique perspective on the house-occupant relationship in its study of people's lived experiences through intimate spaces and objects. If we think about *Space* as a social construct in today's postmodern academic setting, we find that Bachelard's (inherited) concepts of universalization hamper the study in its inferred privileging of one cultural identity over others, and leaves readers wanting. It also neglects to consider how gendered identity and different expectations of gendered labor may also change the ways in which a person interacts with or feels about certain spaces and objects. By using Spillers and Lowe to critique *Space*, it becomes clear that Bachelard's belief in a universal model of living is based on a set of standards, values, and principles which favor Western ideology and European rationale. Spillers reminds us that not everything can be reduced to structures or categories, especially people, since not everything is universal. She proves this in her examples of the enslaved bodies of African

Americans, but her example is just one of many that demonstrate how various cultures and groups have different ways of living. These differences not only vary amongst one another, but also go against the Western standards that are generally imposed on other groups. Lowe reminds us to look at the histories behind the colonial commodification and fetishization of objects, and trace back what has been hidden or forgotten. Objects like the chintz bed curtains, silk stockings, or porcelain used for tea-drinking, all represent a larger, hidden network at play by which these objects become metaphors for the process of exchange and colonialism. Spillers and Lowe each demonstrate the histories of how things came to exist, and the operations through which these things are hidden or forgotten.

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NOVEMBER: A PHOTO JOURNAL

During November 2022, I conducted a workshop at the Wiels museum in Brussels, Belgium, on creative writing and photography with researchers and artists to explore the influence of the photographic camera in contemporary literature. With both Hervé Guibert's concept of the ghost image and Vilém Flusser's concepts of photographic and writing gestures as points of departure, we explored how the camera could shape our phenomenological gaze and condition how we approach a literary text in the context of workshop poetics, ultimately shaping the way we think and the texts we produce. As an active participant myself, a literary photo essay in the likes of a creative critical work resulted from this month-long reflection and artistic practice. Applying the concepts mentioned above, and setting some Oulipian restrictions (the use of an analog camera with a particular wide-angle lens, a black and white film, and the city as an object), this piece is, firstly, a personal exploration on my experience as a foreigner in Brussels, the city in which I have been living for the past two years; and, ultimately, a reflection on the influence of photography in literature, addressing the possibilities and representational limits of both medias, and the conceivable ways they could interact together within a long tradition of photo-literature.

* * *

On the corner of Loncin and Savoie I see in the shadow a trace of blood flowing from one door to next. How many short stories could be written from this image? A drug dealer stabbed after a fraudulent business, a fight over a lover, a dog beheading a pigeon and

taking its prey home. I failed to take that image. Its violence without the blasting sunlight of this morning makes it somehow incomplete (and it would make this text something different). I keep the first photo of this journal for the café where sun cuts the room in two, a shadowed back artificially lightened and a front covered with sparkles of crystal, metal and polished wood. On the terrace, the blue and yellow tables still covered in morning dew wait for people to come. It is a holiday and everyone is at half speed, the bartender in the Black Sabbath t-shirt serving as if he has forgotten where things are placed, the middle age man with broken, lost eyes drinking a Stella sip by sip, and the couple of Spaniards dressed in colorful Quechua garments feeding bits of croissant soaked in coffee to each other.

The first photograph of a roll is possibly only a half image or a non-image at all. The line dividing the completely exposed tip of the film from the first photograph is like a wave stopped in time. Like a shore, which, I learned not long ago, resembles the edge of a tumor, which has the shape of a fractal. The light, which is neither a wave nor a particle, but has properties of both, hits the microscopic silver bromide crystals liberating the until-then-stable electrons, creating a chain reaction which is predictable yet full of serendipity. I see myself in the viewfinder, reflected in one of the round mirrors of the back where I take a seat. The mirror gives back the circular shape to the image, the round lens reflected in the mirror. The 28mm makes me small, lost in the circumference. The space is different, I am different somehow. I am unsure if the picture is taken and where that line, in the shape of a wave, a shore or the edge of a tumor, begins or stops. If it is in some part of the room, in the mirror, in my face, in the camera, in that lens reduced by its own optical determination. Is that line like a trace of blood? The excuse, the beginning of a story?

Thinking about space I walk Defacqz facing north. The sun behind me. I have the idea of taking a picture of a wall. Which one and with what purpose? Since I moved to Brussels, I have struggled to portray the city the way I see it, as I have struggled also to put it into words. In contrast to Baudelaire who stayed for some time in the 1860s and hated it so much that wrote he a whole pamphlet against it (entitled *Pauvre Belges*!), for me there is a kind of familiarity and strangeness which I have not yet been able to discern. Maybe it is because I did not move from the center to the edge, but from the extreme edge to a center which is not center. I think of the surfaces as a way to break through that obstacle. Expand them with the 28mm lens, to expand the city's tissue as a balloon, hoping to break it in order to find something underneath. And yet, I am not at ease with this lens since I bought it a year ago in a flea market. Things feel so far, I have to take two or three steps forward to be content. I seek inspiration in the film directors who use wide angle lenses: Kubrick, Wes Anderson, Sorrentino, Christopher Nolan. But all my pictures seem unreal, unappealing.

Wide angle lenses are designed to cover a broader area, and in doing so they bend the space (barrel distortion). Fisheye lenses, 18mm or lower, are imperfect realizations of the positivist dream of a technical eye which can see all, a God's eye. Images taken with an 8mm lens bend the space to look as if they cover the world in its entirety, as the Borges'

Aleph, the object from which all places in the globe can be seen. But distortion means unreal. Means a failure in a system which proclaims photography is reality. The photography industry, in their positivist, progressive ideology, tends toward a perfect representability of the world (or its phenomenon). Sharpness and color accuracy are qualities to seek.

Of the Nikkor 28mm I found a year ago in a brocante in Ixelles, the blog of Ken Rockwell says:

> There is no sharper manual-focus wide angle lens made by Nikon, and it is the only Nikon wide angle, along with the 15mm f/3.5, that is completely free from barrel distortion at ordinary distances. Optically this is an almost perfect lens, and one of the most perfect lenses you can get to fit a Nikon camera.

There is no bent space, no non-Euclidean geometry, but an even wider world in which everything is ample, bigger and smaller at the same time.

Walking down Defacqz in the afternoon, with the sun behind me, I take two pictures: a red rolled pipe pointing out like a snake before biting (a boring picture I regret taking immediately) and the dotted tiles before a crosswalk. On the side of each protruding dot lays a perpendicular shadow. I approach the camera to have a proper composition of the lines and the dots and their shadows. The space is not bent, it looks bigger, ampler than the phenomenon I see with the other eye (the eye without the camera). That fact both annoys me and fascinates me —both the presumption of reality and the unreality of the image. The sidewalk is not that broad and the tiles not that small, and if they are, the space should be bent to tell people, hey, there is a trick going on here (like pictures on real estate websites of apartments appearing larger than they really are, but one can logically assume that an Ikea armoire is not actually bent). And in that nuance, in that contradiction, I think I could find a way to portray this city. For a second I remember the photo I took yesterday in the bar, the self-portrait, and I question if that person, in the event the image was actually captured, was me or a distorted version.

Coffee and lunch with L. downtown. Returning to Saint Gilles, I enter the Sablon church, or Zavel, as she corrects me. The late autumn sun enters from the stained glass of the façade and its rays are suddenly visible. A concept I started working on in another place comes back. Churches are a black box where the light can be seen. I position myself in the aisle, in front of the altar and take a picture looking back to the façade. I hesitate on which settings to use for the rays to be visible. Choosing to underexpose the picture, I turn then to take a picture of the altar and the Christ hanging like a bomb to be dropped amid the congregation. It is in the altar where the light falls, underneath Christ.

Enlightened, I think of that word. Since Plato, light has become a metaphor for knowledge, and to see it we must go inside caves, as for it is in the darkness where it can be found. Saints are enlightened, as they have seen God (truth), which is depicted with rays of lights coming from the sky, bathing them. Once enlightened, saints have their own light.

They are a source of light and that is why the natural shadow of the rest of the painting does not concern them.

Our relationship with technical images, and photography in particular, is a matter of belief, or as David Levi Strauss puts it, a matter of "*willed* believe" (Strauss 66). Teju Cole, after almost losing his sight, sees vision and photography as a mystical religious experience. To see, and to see through a camera is an act of faith as we choose to doubt or believe, as with Saint Thomas, what is in front of our bare eyes (Cole). In this way, the camera is a machine armed with an ideological discourse to assure that what is portrayed is to be trusted (Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*). There, seeing the sun entering through the stained glass, I think of churches as machines to produce light, or better, to capture the light (truth) before it was possible to capture it in a two-dimensional surface. A church is a machine designed to manipulate that light and to choose what is enlightened. As a *deux ex machina* illuminated on the stage, as the body of Christ is here in this church.

Walking where the light hits I doubt my photographic intentions. It is not the blatant referentiality of Barthes's *ça a été*, nor the mystical experience of the enlightened saint, but the gesture of looking for that light which seems to be so abundant, to be everywhere and still impossible to grasp, which I am looking for by photographing everything. A camera is a movable church which allows me to reflect on what we put the spotlight on, what we choose to believe or not.

A broken mirror reflecting the sky. A white Brussels sky. Later in the Bourse station, under a sculpture growing out of the ceiling, a column with a metallic layer makes a mirror. The space there is completely bent, even further bent in the viewfinder. I am but a piece of blue tissue.

Once a friend said one of the pictures in my bookshelf is like a work of Didier Vermeiren. A rock that could be of the size of a car or a sugar cube. I think of an image not taken yet in which I am the cube, the cobblestone. A reflection or not.

A glass of red wine and a pair of scissors. The beginning of a crime scene.

L.'s cat moves its tail like the cat of *Alice in Wonderland*. He bites her fingers. She likes it and when he presses too hard, she reprehends him surrounding his skull with her hands and massaging the space between the eyes. Ça va, Morizt, she says with a Flemish accent. I would like to capture that moment. Her fingers in the cat snout as she finally masters him. I know L. does not like pictures, so I content myself looking as if I was recording them, as if I was a camera with the shutter opened, coming up with the words I will later use to describe it all, the photographic gaze, the free indirect speech. When she goes to the kitchen, I look at the street from the window. The modern architecture of the 1950s, the corner of a building which reminds me of the Metropolis in Madrid's La Gran Vía. The dome of the Sacre

Coeur Basilica shining in the mist. There is a type of vertigo in that view, and a silence which follows. In a fragment of *One-way Street* Benjamin says that a part of town until then confusing becomes clear when someone we love lives there (Benjamin 74). It is the third time I come here and it still feels strange to me. I wonder if this city will one day feel like a known place.

I take the camera and take a picture of the glass of wine and the pair of scissors on the table. The beginning of a crime scene.

Brussels has been covered in recent weeks with advertisements of a Narciso Rodríguez' perfume. What a name for a fashion brand, I think while taking a picture of this picture of a young androgynous woman next to one of the perfume bottles. Narcissus. How ideal it would have been if it was a self-portrait. A post-capitalist joke.

The photographer holding a camera, looking at the camera through a mirror. This major subject in the history of photography interests me, but also drains me. In literature too. The autofiction, the literature of the self, of the selfie. The hubris of exhibitionism. But it is not exactly what I do, in all these unpublished pieces kept with so much care? At one point I wanted to be more like Isherwood, more like Sebald, where the self is hidden behind subjects which matter more, THE HISTORY, but instead only re-flections came.

A man took the tripod standing in between a set of Ikea bookshelves with one hand and looked around, guessing where it would fit better. Ideally, the camera should be against the windows for the photo to be properly lit. In front of the balcony's French window, the background was somehow uninteresting, as it showed a bit of the bedroom, and a tip of the kitchen. The background of the second window, smaller, but still full of that dark white light of the late autumn afternoon, showed instead one of the bookshelves. How cliché that background would be. So, the man walked with the tripod in hand from one coroner to the other as if each particular spot of those 25m2 would make a difference. For the next three to five minutes, he looked like an ant trapped inside an upside-down glass set by a mischievous child, turning around unaware of its fate.

He planted the tripod on the floor with the resolution of an expeditionary marking an unknown territory, but instead of looking to the bookshelf it was looking to the dresser and the pile of books over the top. Energized by the choice, he jumped up looking for the camera in the shoe rack by the entrance. He screwed it to the tripod, brought a chair from the desk and placed it in front of the camera. How far should it be? Seeing Iñárritu's *Bardo* the previous night, perhaps he had a revelation about the use of wide lenses: they are used by convention to portrait oneiric events close to nightmares. His memory was suddenly full of images of b films he watched during his childhood with scary characters crying or screaming close to the camera, their bloody faces enlarged like balloons before exploding. For that to happen the subject must be in the center, he thought, where the barrel distortion is at its maximum; on the side the distortion is

different, instead of a balloon getting bigger, it's like a balloon getting absorbed by a black hole. But with his optically perfect lens, this achievement of the western civilization, as Japan was ironically the frontier of western civilization in the 1980s, this lens with not five but eight elements, without much barrel distortion at close distances, how would it make him look? Certainly he wouldn't use a mirror to check. His face covered by the camera, the left eye closed and wrinkly as an ass-hole. He preferred to guess the result. And so, he placed the chair as close as possible. He measured the light which was getting worse by the minute, and with a tape, he measured the distance between the camera and the back of the chair to set the focal distance. 70cm. The focus ring of the lens was so smooth, so satisfying to turn. Then he sat, set the self-timer, pressed the shutter and waited trying to look natural without looking natural. He smiled ashamed for he had just blinked, and tried again. This time before pressing the shooter he moved like a jelly, relaxing the muscles as actors do before getting into the stage, breathing deeply and exhaling with his lips closed. *Brrrr.* He didn't blink this time. Now he moved the chair to the right, repeated the procedure, and then to the left and repeated again. He could but guess the result. He could go and check in one of the mirrors, he had so many there in the fabricated living room, nobody witnessing him, nobody judging him. But having in mind all of those scary witches of his childhood laughing in front of the camera was enough. In the perspective of the *esperpento* he would become, he found a hint of katharsis. He remembered Silverio Gama, Iñárritu's character, sitting in a Los Angeles metro car with a plastic bag full of tropical fish resting in his lap before being found dead.

How satisfying it is to write in a classical third person, it feels like walking back home and taking your shoes off. But how tiresome after two paragraphs. How démodé, how god damned workshop "show don't tell" ritornello.

In the podcast I'm listening to, a bunch of French intellectuals reflect on the meaning of the Nobel Prize given to Annie Ernaux instead of Salman Rushdie, recently stabbed in the face by an Iranian Islamist in New York. It was a Nobel, they are concluding, to a literature engaged with the self, supposedly addressing the world through the bias of the self, but narcissistic and chauvinistic, and a final blow to a cosmopolitan literature developed in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, of which Rushdie was one of the main writers.

I was raised on that literature, I think while I arched back with the camera in the face looking for the best angle to capture the white wall of the old ice factory of Ma Campagne, a transnational literature lost in translation, where borders are fragile, porous entities of a globalized world unified by the Gutenberg universe, and the new transatlantic networks developed through computers. I see the contradiction. That was also a literature of progress (the wrong one?), of neoliberalism and consumerism which just brought us to near extinction, and which corresponds to the era of the use and the abuse of technical images; but also of universal values and freedom. Isn't Ernaux still part of it, but with a different flavor? I think of the photos of *L'usage de la photo*, of their chauvinistic, self-centered use which still appeals to me.

Where does this picture I am taking fit in this *récit*, in the evolution of literature as a medium? In this nauseating first person which would rather be third, second, or a new one, which would be all of them and none.? "Si se pudiera decir:", writes Cortázar in *Las babas del diablo*, "yo vieron subir la luna, o: nos me duele el fondo de los ojos, y sobre todo así: tú la mujer rubia eran las nubes que siguen corriendo delante de mis tus sus nuestros vuestros sus rostros. Qué diablos." (Cortázar 115).

During the workshop, I mention Sebald's photography as a portrait of the mental state of his characters. I use as an example the pictures in *Austerlitz* of the fortress of Breendonk, only 20 km from Brussels, used in the early 20th century as one of the defense lines of Antwerp and then as a concentration camp during the Holocaust. In the novel, the Sebald-like narrator visits the building and talks of the impossibility "to form a picture of the complex" (Sebald 25). Have you been? I ask the group and tell them, after visiting the place one year ago, how strange the building looked to me but, more importantly, how, confirming Sebald's thoughts, impossible it was to grasp, first with the camera, and then to construct a mental idea out of it, once inside its tunnels and numerous cells, but also outside where the size and shape of the fortress makes it almost impossible to guess what is around every corner. That is why those two pictures, I venture, flat, boring images of the wall and batteries protecting the fortress, are there, not because of their aesthetics, which are at the least amateurish and tourist-like, but to show the impossibility of understanding the place, its messy design and the horrors which took place there; and why, I finish, these images are followed by the map showing the crab like architecture of the fortress, trying to rationalize the experience, as all maps and blueprints are rationalizations, models of reality and not reality itself. I ask them if Sebald's feeling of impossibility is not mediated by the camera, the point and shoot Sebald actually used on a trip to Breendonk in 1997 and its limited 35mm lens. The camera and its limitations delve into the feeling of impossibility to understand both the building and the atrocities which were perpetrated inside.

Wouldn't it be the same, M. asks, if one walks there in plain sight? I think about it for a second before giving an answer. Possibly, yes, although the human sight, as being binocular, is always wider than any lens. With the camera we narrow our sight intentionally. For Flusser that is advantageous as it allows us to understand that there are different points of view, and that each one corresponds to a different "understanding" of reality (that is why the photographic gesture is a philosophical way of thinking (Flusser, *Gestures*)). How, for instance, depending on where we place the camera a politician could be a god or a small little man. But, regardless of this, is not the camera narrowing our understanding of reality when used as a medium, and sometimes, the only one to grasp it?

I'm waiting for E. in the Château Moderne. In front, a couple is talking, holding hands. They are in their mid-twenties, the girl has a short thin top, despite the poor heating, and the guy a knitted blue sweater with the sleeves up. They both have that untraceable

appearance of people coming from a mixed culture, tan skin and brunette hair and eyes, plus an indiscernible European English versed in international affairs.

Above, a leaning mirror shows me the couple from a different angle. I can see her exposed lower back, the delicate wisps of hair escaping her bow, and the man's strong armpits and slender torso. Suddenly, that image coming from the mirror seems pornographic. As If I'm witnessing something that shouldn't be seen. I avert the gaze for a second, ashamed, but I can't resist and my eyes go back to them quite soon, jumping from one to the other perspective. They either don't care, or haven't even noticed me in the bar's dim light. I take the camera, set the aperture, the speed and focus. A bad composition, but I shoot regardless.

When E. arrives, I'm reading the Eduard Levé I have with me. The couple is kissing by now. I avoid looking in the mirror and focus on E.'s face, blushed by the cold and the short run from the bus stop at Gare Central. How difficult I have always found to take her portrait since we met almost a year ago. How uncomfortable she gets in front of the camera, both wanting to be captured and fearing the result. I think of Levé pictures of pornographic scenes using completely dressed models. For a second, while E. is talking about work, I picture her sitting at the table in front of us reading or talking with someone else. In the image reflected by the mirror, I would finally see *her*, really exposed.

It is in the edges where I find a crack. The space enlarges, but it still has to be set to become the cliff where vertigo flourishes into something new.

When the auditorium lights are out, the stage lamps dimly light the public, mostly composed by enthusiastic young women, making them a succession of 18th century silhouettes.

Rachel Cusk talks about her latest novel and among the feminist brouhaha she says something which strikes me. There is no freedom in literature, she says, as it is an extremely codified language. Visual art is freer, but the only way to include it in the novel is through ekphrasis.

How paradoxical, I think, pointing my camera at the public and leaving the writer and the interviewer on the frame's edge, writers cannot help but be in love with images, all while being extremely iconoclastic.

What is the status, I think after reading Cusk's novel, of those paintings made by L., Cusk's fictional character, maniac paintings of the end of world? How real are they in comparison to an actual picture? An image can replace a word in a sentence, Magritte jests in *Les mots et les images*. They should, suggests Paul Valery in the conference given in 1939 for the centenary of the invention of photography (Valéry). And yet in the poverty of language there is still a huge value. The spaces filled by the reader's imagination that gives something a pictorial image cannot. The vivacity of each one's internal world which makes literature, in Eco's terms, an *opera aperta* (Eco).

Sunset over Rue de l'Hotel des Monnnaies after a day at the University. Deep dark blue. Magritte Brussels blue. The blue it is not going to be captured in the black and white of the film I'm using, and yet I point at it. I repeat the gesture of last night in the conference. But now it is the sky which takes over the frame. The above, the celestial.

I tried once to do a series after Magritte's *L'empire des lumières*. The blue after the sunset. The blue which is the entrance to the night. A night that could be either celestial or hellish.

Let's focus, I say in the workshop, on how Kate Zembrano emphasizes the photographic gesture as a method of thinking, and therefore of writing. We analyze a fragment of *Drifts* in which she goes everyday around her neighborhood in New York taking pictures of trees, and sometimes of the same tree with a set of holes which reminds her of Munch's *Scream*. This act of repetition allows her to reflect on her childhood, the passing of time and her ideas about literature, and art as a "process" and a "ritual" (Zambreno 158). To open the discussion, I ask if the photograph reproduced, a closeup of the tree whose holes resemble Munch's *Scream*, was necessary. For M. it was not, as there is already a description of the image. T. agrees and says that the good thing of the Guibert text about ghost images we read firstly was precisely the intentional gesture of omitting all photographs to give the text all the power of representation. I quote some examples of Sebald in which the repetition of text and image adds some value to the overall meaning of the novel. It is all about making that repetition worthy, rather than an empty gesture, I emphasize. I try to defend Zambreno's approach and, ultimately, the need of a photo-literature which is both textual and visual. But to be honest, I'm not convinced of what I say in front of the participants, I share their doubts and I still struggle to find the proper place of photographs in the texts I write without falling in the typical fictional trick of the 'found' family album, or the fictionalization of historical photos bought in a flea market.

Walking up Parc Forest, I reflect on all those pictures that I take repeatedly, in a way like Zambreno, without any real intention but ultimately trying to understand what is in front of me. But even if the photos, the practice of taking each of them, help me think about those places and the people inhabiting them, I still hesitate on the place those images have in the texts I write.

I point the camera to the Avenue Adolphe Demeur, it is busy out, the bars, the restaurants, and coffee shops and the cheese shops, the cars, the bikes, the pedestrians walking home with groceries in their hands. It would make a perfect night shot. But somehow tired of all of it, my finger wiggles around the shutter and never presses.

Red looks good on you, I tell J. She has a new red sweater and red lipstick which contrast with her white skin and blue eyes. We catch up over coffee. Her thanksgiving dinner, her plans for the holidays abroad. Taking a picture of each other is becoming our

new farewell ritual, even though the camera was one of the main issues when we were together. Living with a camera, with a photographer, says Jane Gallop about her relationship with Dick Blau, "means that both the domestic and intimate are available to the camera's gaze" (Gallop and Blau 3). And how complicated that *availability* could be, and how necessary to *understand* the other. I avoid her face, and point to the cardigan and her delicately crossed arms and hands.

I see the Carrefour downstairs is already selling pots with fresh poinsettias with half of the leaves a vivid red. At home I stand in front of the poinsettia I have over the mantel. It is its third December, and the second one without red leaves. It is as if it doesn't know about Christmas, I think while taking it out to the balcony where some sun hits.

On film their green leaves will be gray as J.'s red sweater. So, let's say that they are actually both red.

Red as blood.

The television screens interpose each other like a horizontal cascade of images: a sequence shot of the streets of Moscow in the seventies; Brussels at night, a woman cleaning herself in a bathtub. It is this last image which really calls my attention. She doesn't take a shower or a bath. Sat on the tub with the tap open, she uses a scrubber to clean every part of her body, back, neck, chest, and thighs, quite patiently and diligently. When she finishes, she dresses and sits to have dinner with a teenager who seems to be her son. There is nothing sexual or awkward about it. In the back of the room, a set of speakers reproduces Chantal Akerman's voice reading *Une famille à Bruxelles* in an English translation. Her strong French accent is quite clear and crisp while she, at the moment the woman is cleaning herself, impersonates the voice of her mother talking about the coma of her husband. I miss the shot, but take another of Aurore Clément in *Toute une Nuit*.

After visiting the exhibition at Bozar, I talk with S. about it. She tells me she saw the movie of the woman in the bath some years ago when an old lover introduced her to some art cinema. During three hours, it depicts the daily routine of this woman. We realize quite soon she is a prostitute.

There are several things which strike me of the movie: the working class setting and decoration (paper wall, the porcelain pieces, the little lamps, the armoire, the functional kitchen with the flowered curtains); the obsession of the characters for turning off lights systematically (a petit bourgeois gesture I was raised with and have lost with time), and the character's small ticks to show the slow changes in her state of mind.

In the middle of the screening at Cinematek M. asks me if the lens is broken, as the characters are always out of focus. What an eye she has; it is true, there is a slight lack of focus when, for instance, the woman is in the kitchen, cooking or doing the dishes and only the commode in the foreground is sharp. This makes me wonder what type of lens Ackerman was using. I guess a 50mm. How the narrowness of the angle adds to the

oppression of the movie and the mental state of the character. Is that the same Brussels I am living in now? I wonder during the long shot of her peeling potatoes and preparing the meat for the night. In the film it seems like a small, petit bourgeois town where nobody would like to live (that's why Akerman eventually did move to New York and then to Paris, a city that is not named in *Une famille à Bruxelles* but by the neighborhood, Ménilmontant in the 20th arrondissement). I had the same impression watching *Toute une nuite* some months ago. A kind of narrowness which reminded me of home, as Bogotá was narrow and limited in those same years (Antonio Caballero's *Sin remedio* comes to mind). A friend from home visiting told me if you take a picture of this building down Chausée d'Ixelles, a building probably constructed in the 60s or 70s during the expansion of the brutalist architecture in Brussels, with marble and black iron fencing, a close-up picture without any context, you couldn't say if it was taken here or in Chapinero. Yes, I agree, it is that familiarity which attracted me to the city from the first time I came. And yet I don't want to accept that it is as narrow as Bogotá (is it the same type of narrowness?). There are all these other layers, the past and the present of Brussels which I hang up to, as if it would save me from something I am trying to escape and still haunts me.

So I go armed with the 28mm to the 23 quai du Commerce and take a picture of both the house where the movie was shot and of the street. The neighborhood has changed. In front of the house a black Porsche 911 is parked and the house is surrounded by art galleries and hipster bars, cohabitating with small groups of African immigrants telling jokes to each other in narrow circles in front of the Marguerite Duras tram station. The city is different, the neighborhood has changed, and yet remained the same.

While I take some pictures, after a whole day of raining, the sky opens and it seems ample and blue.

Rainy, gray day. I would like to finish the film with a series of the Palais de Justice. It was the first place I wanted to visit the first time I came to Brussels as I could never stop thinking of it after reading Sebald's description in *Austerlitz*. A messy labyrinth. I went with J. who showed me around. Most of the building was closed then, but we could go into the main open corridors and sneak some photos in that autumnal afternoon. The building has not changed much since. The scaffolding is new, but the building itself is as it was the last time I entered. The gray stones, the monumental statues shadowed by heavy layers of dust. No picture is really appealing, no lens can capture the monumentality and assuredness of the building (as with Breendonck, as if the atrocious acts committed first in the colonial exploitation of the Congo, of which this building was a dammed reflection, and those committed the first and second world war, were impossible to depict by technical images, possible only by other more flexible means like painting or writing). I may come another time, on a sunny day and try once more.

Later I have an interview with Jean McNail and we talk about the role of photography in her writing. Something I'm hearing more and more often comes up: the need to return to text in a world exhausted by images. I think of Flusser as a prophet. Someone who foresaw

the universe of technical images we are living in and its intrinsic poverty. With a delightful irony, he finishes *The gesture of writing* describing writers as melancholic beings who can not accept a new world where thinking happens in photographs and video, and who cannot even think of writing as an "arte povera," doing it regardless of knowing it is "no longer worth the effort" (Flusser, *Gestures* 25). But the question is not of being démodé or reactionary, it is about being aware of how the medium we choose fashions the way we think. And given that those mediums are determined, programmed by institutions and corporations, that choice becomes political (Citton). Flusser, for the time he wrote, was undecided, like the tennis ball in Woody Allen's *Match Point* hanging suspended for a second on either side of the court. Sometimes he embraces technical images, sometimes he prized writing as the only medium which allows us to think properly. The last decades have proved that we cannot embrace a world of only technical images or text produced by machines, and even if that world is unavoidable, we should persevere, as a political choice, to write and think still in text.

There is one last exposure and I don't know what to shoot. I carry the camera all day, up and down. E. organizes a talk on food and crisis in a cultural center near Flagey. The place is annoyingly fancy. It was not like this before, E. tells me, when I worked here half of the house was under construction, they have done a good job since, she says looking at the succession of designer sofas, lamps, and the shiny Steinway in the middle of the room. She is nervous, I can tell by how fast she speaks using more British expressions than usual, but the talk goes perfectly and the audience claps and cheers.

After I met some of E.'s friends, mostly women in their late twenties linked somehow to the European institutions. We had some chocolate and Belgian sparkling wine, quite mineral and acidic. One of the speakers, a British Politico reporter, also joins us with a couple of men, a Scottish man who laughs like a James Bond villain and a Venezuelan with a mustache and a pink dress as though taken from *The Fifth Element*. I like how this couple looks. How in their queerness they manage their bodies, their postures, and how they contrast with the Politico guy, a classical male with an expensive working-class outfit, messy hair, black eyes and lousy posture. I would like to take a picture of each one. A sociological portrait à la Sander of the Brussels I'm living in. Not Baudelaire's, not Akerman's. A picture of E. with her new silk shirt, of her Spanish friend with a thick accent and a manola face, of this queer couple, of the Politico guy and his Jean Dean-style tormented face. I can even see them through the lens without using the camera, the narrow faces, the faces of a placid dream before becoming a nightmare. But I'm tired of failing at those kinds of pictures. Of having bad portraits of people I barely know, because it is of the places and people I care about I want to capture most. So I just look at them, touching my camera as if it was a hunting dog by my side.

It is Friday night and people seem tired. The night doesn't go long. Before saying bye, E.'s Spanish friend asks her to show us the coke table. What? Yes, the coke table with drawers that are flat mirrors to cut lines. And she takes us to the room where the table is. A

beautiful stylish table of polished solid wood. And the Spanish friend runs and opens one of the drawers as if she was going to cut a line right away. I'm mesmerized. I approach one of the mirrors, which actually is full of pink dust with lines already formed, lines of dust formed randomly like the edges of a tumor. Tutsi, says the Venezuelan. Somehow home always catches up with me, I think while pointing the camera, suddenly tired. This is going to be the last picture. Another reflection, a mis-representation.

"Donc ce texte n'aura pas illustration, qu'une amorce de pellicule vierge" (Guibert 17), concludes Guibert as he realizes the portrait of his mother failed and will only exit as a ghost image, that is, as a description of that moment, the text we are reading. It is tempting to do the same here, as most of the photos I took for this journal revealed themselves unsatisfactory. From the first picture in the bar to the last one in the bar with E.'s friends. There is another gesture I would like to explore, nonetheless. The need of replacing the first photographic gesture mediated by the camera, by the gesture of transforming those technical images into something else. In that gesture something deeper could be found. So I decided for this text to include images, but images that do not correspond to those initially planned.

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Nicole Assunta DiCamillo is a Brooklyn based Fine Artist and rising senior studying at St. John's University. She works in a variety of mediums; including painting, drawing, digital illustration, printmaking, digital and film photography. The vastness of nature and its ecosystems has been a continuous source of inspiration for her work. It is something she believes will be an everlasting exploration throughout her life. She passionately believes that we have the responsibility to protect, respect, and cherish all that the world provides for us. This has inspired her to embark on the journey of painting these three endangered species, as part of a larger body of work. Through the process of oil painting, she created a sense of deeply rooted connection between the creatures and their surrounding environment. Nicole's work can be found on her page @artbynik.

Insight

Strength

Peace

Richard Marranca is an author, teacher and filmmaker. He's had recent publications in Minerva, Popular Archaeology, Ancient World Magazine, The Raven's Perch, DASH and Coneflower Cafe. The latter nominated him for a Pushcart Prize. His Egyptian manuscript will be published this year by Blydyn Square Books. He and his wife, Renah, and child, Inanna, also make films: in 2022 *Covid, A Child's View* received awards from the Cranford Film Festival and the London Short Film Festival.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. ZAHI HAWASS: EGYPTOLOGY, CT SCANS, ROBOTS & THE HUMANITIES

Dr. Zahi Hawass is one of the most distinguished and active Egyptologists. He earned degrees in Cairo and Alexandria, then received a Fulbright to complete a doctorate in Egyptology at the University of Pennsylvania. He has held various positions in Egypt, culminating in being named Supreme Head of Antiquities. He continues to play a large role in major excavations and is known for tirelessly promoting ancient Egypt and native-born Egyptologists. He and his team discovered the necropolis of the builders of the pyramids at Giza, began excavations of tombs at Bahariya Oases, initiated the Egyptian Mummy Project, discovered major tombs – and the list continues. His knowledge and narrative skill, in publishing and media, have made him widely known. His books include *Tutankamun, the Mystery of the Boy King*; *The Great Book of Ancient Egypt: In the Realm of the Pharaohs; Giza and the Pyramids*, and many more.

Egypt is one of the cradles of civilization which continues to surprise us with new discoveries. The interview shows how archaeology is a multidisciplinary endeavor; the tools of science are essential to excavating and understanding Egypt. Dr. Hawass said he loves talking about King Tutankhamen, which is where we begin.

RM: Can you tell us about Howard Carter and the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb? An Egyptian worker was the first to notice something, right?

Dr. Hawass: Yes, Carter hired a young boy, Hussein Abd el-Rassul, aged 12, to bring water to the workers on a donkey every day. When he arrived at site, the workers would help him to take the water jug off the donkey and dig a hole in the ground to hold the jar. One day, when digging a hole for the jar, this boy found the entrance to the tomb. He ran and told Carter about it, who came over and confirmed that it was the entrance to a tomb. After they opened the tomb, Carter rewarded Hussein by letting him pose with one of Tutankhamun's necklaces on for a photograph. Hussein never worked another day in his life. He would sit on the West Bank with a copy of this photo telling people that he was the one who found King Tut's tomb. This story was confirmed by Sheikh Ali, who was the boy's cousin.

RM Note: Howard Carter took great interest in Egyptology at the nearby Amherst estate with its collection of antiquities, and he showed skill as a painter. In 1890 Lady Amherst sponsored him through the Egypt Exploration Fund to join a family friend, Egyptologist Percy Edward Newberry. Carter was just seventeen years old when he arrived in Egypt as an artist to record tomb art but soon was trained as an excavator. Over the following years, he worked on various excavations, including a season at Amarna under the tutelage of Flinders Petrie. He also worked as inspector of monuments. His expertise impressed Gaston Maspero, Head of the Egyptian Antiquities Service, who *introduced Carter to Lord Carnarvon, the wealthy benefactor. The rest is history.*

RM: It's amazing that something so amazing can be found because a donkey's leg falls into a hole and soon the area is giving up its treasures. Do such accidents happen much in archaeology?

Dr. Hawass: Oh yes! Many accidents like that have led to amazing discoveries. A similar incident happened with the catacombs of Alexandria. While Howard Carter was excavating the Valley of the Kings, at one point a horse's leg got stuck in a hole which happened to hold a beautiful statue of Montuhotep II. I am sure that there are far more of these accidents than we know of from the archaeological record.

RM Note: Below Dr. Hawass states that "Tutankhamun was not murdered." Since the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in November 1922, there has been talk of murder. There was evidence of a blow to the back of Tut's head. Also in the Hittite archives, letters from Tut's widow, Ankhesenamun, to the Hittite king, Suppiluliumas, reveal her request for one of his sons – and the message that she would not marry an Egyptian commoner. The Hittite prince eventually arrived but was killed outside of Egypt's borders.

In the 1930s, Percy Edward Newberry was snooping around an antiquities shop in Cairo and came across a ring with a double cartouche of Ay, who was the vizier of Tut, and Ankhesenamun, Tut's widow. Perhaps Ankhesenamun was forced to marry the old vizier. Nowhere, however, is she depicted in Ay's tomb. She vanished from history; nothing is known beyond that.

And so, the latest science seems to prove that Tut was not murdered. Perhaps he fell from his chariot. Perhaps he was going too fast. Perhaps other diseases, such as malaria, played a role. So Ay became pharaoh, followed by

RM: It is amazing that you and the team studied Tut's mummy with a CT scan. Can you tell us about what you learned? What are some mysteries you wish were solved?

Dr. Hawass: As said before, Tutankhamun was not murdered. The hole in his skull was made by the embalmers for removing his brain tissue. Other damage to the mummy was done by Carter in an effort to remove the golden mask and other treasures. We did find out, however, that Tutankhamun had a flat foot. The blood would not reach his toes and he had

to walk with a cane. He also had an injury to his leg two days before he died. It seems then that he died in some kind of accident. We are studying the mummy to see if there was any infection around the leg injury which might have killed him.

RM: Also, you mentioned Tutankhamun's mother's tomb in the Valley of the Kings. Is it hers?

As to the mother of Tutankhamun, we found through DNA analysis that she is the younger female mummy from KV35, however we still do not know her name. We know that she was a daughter of Amenhotep III and Queen Tiye, meaning that Akhenaten married his own sister. Her mummy was moved to the cache in KV35 at a later date, so we are still looking for her tomb.

Dr. Hawass: In an anthology, *Discovery: Unearthing the New Treasures of Archaeology*, you mentioned that finding the cemetery at Giza proves that the "pyramid builders were free Egyptians and not slaves." Also, you mentioned that there were just "10,000 workmen at any one time." Can you tell us about this?

The discovery proved that these workers had Egyptian names and were workers, not slaves. They were not foreigners forced to work. If they had been slaves, they would never have been buried at Giza. They were given tombs for eternity like the kings and queens whose pyramids they helped build. The lower cemetery was for the workers who moved the stones while the upper cemetery was for the technicians and more skilled workers. Important families in the country would send workmen to work on the pyramids. To the east of the cemetery, we also found a bakery and an area for making fish. These workers were well fed with areas for sleeping. There were villages for the timber workmen and for the artisans. This was a large project with many people working on it.

RM: In the second essay in *Discovery*, you mentioned a few tantalizing mysteries about the Great Pyramid at Giza. Can you tell us about that and also the use of robots to explore nooks and crannies?

Dr. Hawass: We were looking at small tunnels that go high inside the pyramid. We hired a robot from Germany to explore these tunnels. It went into a tunnel and at 60 m it was stopped by a door with two copper handles. We then did a live show with Nat Geo where we put a hole in the door to see what was behind it and found a second door. We are still working to find what is going on in unexplored areas of the pyramid. We have different teams using multiple different technologies to look for voids and possible unknown chambers.

RM Note: Dr. Hawass mentions the practice of leaving tombs unexcavated for future generations. Archaeology, in some sense, is a destructive search for the past. Leaving areas untouched, however, allows future archaeologists the opportunity to establish a more complete picture and is a form of conservation.

RM: Your book, V*alley of the Golden Mummies*, is about the great discoveries at Bahariya Oasis. You show "a wide range of monuments, tombs, and temples dating from as early as the Eighteenth Dynasty through the Greco-Roman and Coptic Periods." Can you tell us about this?

Dr. Hawass: This was a very important discovery. We found over 200 mummies with gold, including two mummies of children beautifully mummified. These mummies were all put in a nearby museum. We also found many artifacts such as stelae, necklaces, and especially cups for wine. The reason these burials were so rich is that the people in Bahariya made and sold wine. They clearly did good business judging by the items in their tombs. We did not excavate the entire area, however. We intentionally left tombs for future generations to excavate, perhaps with even better methods than we have today.

RM: What are the types of mummies that were found — as in high quality down to just a shroud of linen? How about "The Bride Mummy" that you wrote about?

Dr. Hawass: We found a mummy covered with gold. The cartonnage was prepared with religious scenes. She appeared to be a bride prepared for her husband…Perhaps she died before the wedding? We can't know for sure. We found so many mummies that there was a great variety. Not all of them had gold, including a mummy I nicknamed "Mr. X". We x-rayed Mr. X and found that he had died at age 30.

RM: You're a tireless Egyptologist. I recently saw some notes about your upcoming lecture tour. What else are you working on now?

Dr. Hawass: Several projects: at Saqqara, finding Old Kingdom tombs near the pyramid of Teti and at Gisr el-Mudir. We're using DNA analysis to search for the mummies of Nefertiti and Ankhesenamun of the 18th dynasty, and excavating in the Valley of the Kings looking for their tombs. I'm heading a project which is doing conservation on the tomb of Ramses II. And I am still excavating the Golden City that was found in Luxor last year.

RM Note: Thanks to Dr. Zahi Hawass for an insightful look at the field of Egyptology. Dr Hawass' latest book *The Great Book of Ancient Egypt: In the Realm of the Pharaohs* is available for those interested in a deeper archaeological story of ancient Egypt.

PHILIP'S DEATH & ALEXANDER'S AFTERLIFE: DR. PAUL CARTLEDGE ON THE FUSION OF HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Dr. Paul Cartledge is one of the world's renowned scholars of ancient Greece with major achievements in publishing, media and education. He is Emeritus A. G. Leventis Professor of Greek Culture at the University of Cambridge and a Global Distinguished Professor at New York University. He was chief historical consultant for the BBC series *The Greeks* and the Channel 4 series *The Spartans*, presented by Bettany Hughes. Dr. Cartledge is also a holder of the Gold Cross of the Order of Honor of Ancient Greece and an Honorary Citizen of Sparta. His books are many and include A*lexander the Great: The Hunt for a New Past*; *The Spartans: An Epic History*; *Democracy: A Life; Thebes*: T*he Forgotten City of Ancient Greece*, among other scholarly works.

This interview shows how Alexander's life and times require a background across the humanities and social sciences. It includes the Alexander Romance tradition – the mingling of imagination & history. Alexander had an enormous impact during and after his life – a story for the ages, a window into history and human nature. The interview, specifically, sheds light on Greek religion, myth, mortuary practices and archaeology.

RM: Alexander's incredible father, Philip, was killed at the wedding of his daughter. What religious and mortuary process would the body have gone through?
Philip's now thought to have been buried in Tomb 1 at Vergina, ancient Aigai. Cremation followed by interment with lavish grave goods within a tumulus. Alexander will have masterminded proceedings, but he had been estranged from his father - and may even have had something to do with his assassination. Alexander who died in 323 in Babylon was embalmed until sent on his way back to Pella two years later, but his corpse was hijacked near Damascus by Ptolemy (later King Ptolemy I) who had it re-buried first at Memphis, then finally at Alexandria.

Dr. Cartledge: Can you tell us about Philip's tomb? Also, I recall that some small statues of Alexander are in the tomb? Do you think Alexander's tomb will ever be found?
The old view was that his Tomb was Tomb 2-even more lavish than Tomb 1. Golden casket with 16 point Macedonian star. Weapons, armor, lavish furniture decorated with ivory portrait heads. I think I still prefer to think of Tomb 2 as Philip's. Alex's tomb at Alexandria will never be recovered as it's well under water now!

RM: Soon after Alexander died Ptolemy, his boyhood friend and general, hijacked Alexander's corpse, bringing it back to Egypt. What's that about? (I fondly recall our email exchanges with Dr. Salima Ikram who believes that Alexander's tomb might be under the Elite Cafe in Alexandria.)
Dr. Cartledge: When Ptolemy got hold of Alexander's mummified corpse near Damascus, Ptolemy was 'only' Satrap of Egypt. By acquiring as a talisman the corpse of Alexander and

having it reburied in the new capital that Alexander himself had marked out in 332, at Alexandria, Ptolemy elevated his status – putting him, a commoner, in a position to declare himself King of Egypt in 306.

RM: Upon his death, where did Alexander and Philip believe they were headed?
Dr. Cartledge: Hades in Philip's case. Alex is more complicated, as he had recently married two Persian women according to Persian ritual in 324 and may therefore have taken on board some of their Zoroastrian beliefs.

RM: Was the Homeric view of the afterlife more prevalent than what the Orphic or Eleusinian Mysteries offered?
Dr. Cartledge: The Homeric view is expressed in Odyssey 11 - where Odysseus esp. wants to meet the shade of his recently dead mum, Anticleia. Emphasis on 'shade': these ghosts are bloodless until fed blood, after which infusion instead of merely gibbering they can actually converse with Odysseus in Greek. The shade of Achilles is extreme but on the same - negative - end of the Homeric spectrum: he'd prefer anything to being dead, even being an unpaid servant of a very poor man up on earth.

The contrast with the - cheery - Orphic/Eleusinian view couldn't be starker. And the latter was surely more prevalent - hence the fact that so many had themselves initiated in the Eleusinian Mysteries. (There were far fewer Orphics, because Orphics abstained from animal blood-sacrifice.)

RM: With the Alexander Romance tradition, Alexander is a never-ending story. Do you have a favorite tale?
Dr. Cartledge: The Romance originated in Alexandria in late Hellenistic times (1st century BCE) in Greek. From there it took wings – being translated into Latin and then in the Middle Ages entering the national literatures of many other countries. Perhaps my favorite tale from the Romance itself is the notion that Alexander was so curious he went to the bottom of the ocean in a glass bathyscaphe. From the non-Hellenic tradition inspired by the Romance my favorites concern Alexander's reception in Islamic countries, even to the extent of his features as 'Two Horns' in… the Quran!!

RM: Pop culture continues the story of Alexander. Didn't you meet up with Oliver Stone, the director of Alexander?
Dr. Cartledge: I did indeed meet and have lunch with Oliver Stone, a remarkably intelligent man as well as brilliant screenwriter and movie director. Unfortunately, his Alexander movie was not his best… He couldn't make up his mind what sort of Alexander he wanted Colin Farrell (a poor choice, in my view) to represent. I co-edited a volume of academic essays on the movie published with University of Wisconsin, *Responses to Oliver Stone's Alexander: Film, History, and Cultural Studies*.

Jade Hichborn lives in Hudson, Maine. She is a graduate student in the English master's program at UMaine and is expected to graduate in Spring '24. She received her BS from Husson University and is currently the Special Assistant for Academic Affairs at the University of Maine in Orono. Jade recently presented her paper, "*The Timeless Issue of Mental Health: An Interpretation of Christopher Smart's 'A Song to David' and a Misunderstanding of Religious Fervor*" at the Master's in English Regional Conference (MERC) at Bridgewater State University. Her research interests include the intersection of religion and eighteenth-century literature and twentieth-century feminist poetry. Jade's decision to review Farr's work, and similar scholarship, is motivated by a desire to draw attention to how the humanities as a field can do better moving forward and can avoid contributing to negative discourse towards marginalized groups.

DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER: JASON FARR'S CHALLENGE TO ABLEISM AND HOMOPHOBIA IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE

Farr Jason S. *Novel Bodies : Disability and Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century British Literature*. Bucknell University Press 2019.

When considering eighteenth-century literature, one might not immediately associate it with disability and queer studies, but after reading Jason Farr's *Novel Bodies: Disability and Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century British Literature*, you most certainly will. Over four in-depth chapters, Farr reimagines the way we interpret works by prolific authors such as Horace Walpole, Samuel Richardson and, of course, the beloved Jane Austen, by giving us a through-line of disability and queerness that these authors used to advocate for social reform. Farr's delve into this intersection of literary concern begins with the argument that eighteenth-century authors (and others in society) would often equate homosexuality and disability, and conversely, would do the same with heterosexuality and able-bodiedness/good health. From this premise, Farr expands how these authors used these equivalencies to push for social change.

While at times his berth seems too wide, Farr does make a point to narrow in on specific ideas from each of the many authors he discusses: including, but not limited to, deaf education, cross-dressing and disability, chronic illnesses and healthy marriages, and the queer ocular. For someone outside this specific subset of research, Farr does an excellent job integrating a discipline-specific vocabulary in a seamless fashion. His introductions on audism (the social system which makes vocal interaction the default), physiognomic thought (the psychological phenomenon where we mirror people's outward appearances with what we believe their morals/beliefs will be), and narrative prosthesis

(narrative dependence on disability for its narratability) collectively allow for a comprehensive reading experience.

In his chapter on *Pamela* by Samuel Richardson, Farr discusses how the physical appearance of Mrs. Jewkes - Mr. B's accomplice - changes with her character arc. As Mrs. Jewkes moves from being a cruel captor to a wholesome companion, we notice a significant decrease in how much her appearance is described. According to Farr, this is Richardson establishing how society associates physical deformity with depravity. Physiognomic thought causes our brains to mirror someone's internal beliefs and personality with their outward appearance - creating an unfounded connection between disability and perversion within society. And while Richardson was portraying the typical way people in society would interact with someone with a disability, Richardson's goal was to change the way we as a society judged people by their appearances.

In Chapter Three, Farr examines the works of Tobias Smollett, specifically *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker,* and provides commentary on Smollett's representation of what defines a marriage. Throughout the novel, the two main couples of Win and Clinker and Lydia and Young have evolving romantic relationships, but do not end up married until they have all resolved their outstanding physical ailments. Farr notes, "In each of these pairings, young, healthy bodies come together at the altar of marriage. Smollett's assertion of heterosexuality is thus contingent on the attainment of health." Instead of acknowledging disabilities and living life as it stands, Smollett opted to have his characters wait until they were in good health to wed, confirming Farr's thoughts that, at this time, heterosexuality had to be linked to good health and reproduction. Smollett's representation of disability in his novel, while negative, still allows us to have a conversation today on how people with disabilities should and should *not* be represented in literature.

In his introduction, which bleeds into Chapter One, Farr looks at the sociological background of this link between disability and queerness. Beginning with John Locke, Farr examines disability as viewed by philosophers, and society in general, who saw it as a mental atrophy and believed that even strictly physical disabilities extended to an individual's mental state. From here, Farr builds his argument by looking at the literary representations of Duncan Campbell, a deaf prophet. He finds that eighteenth-century literature exhibited a connection between homosexuality and disability because of the narrow-minded understanding there was of both groups of people. Just as disabled people were often all grouped together with physical and mental disability being correlated as overlapping, non-heterosexual individuals were also seen as lacking able body and mind. Farr notes the link when he writes, "[. . .] like sodomitical activity, deafness could be a potential impediment to the passing down of land and the extension of the family line." This takes us back to the root of Farr's argument that this parallel that is being drawn between authors during this time is between heterosexuality and health, and homosexuality and disability, meaning, if someone was unable to contribute to the advancement of lineage, they were then considered deformed or lacking in some way, leading to disabled and queer folks being represented as one and the same.

While Farr's work includes a fairly dense theoretical framework, especially if this is not your field of expertise, I do believe it is still a worthwhile read for anyone interested in eighteenth-century literature and I would recommend it to those interested in queer studies. This text is especially important in the current literary discourse because it brings attention to the queer community and is contributing to the conversation on inclusivity in literature. All that being said, Farr beats any critics to the punch and points out his own neglect in not mentioning the intersectionality of women of color and disability (although he does recommend the works of Nirmala Erevelles and Andrea Minear for those interested in this area), and the lack of novelty in his idea that dates as far back as Francis Bacon theorizing about disability in conjunction with queer representation. To this, I would add my own critique of the liberty he takes in outing some characters as queer, such as Duncan Campbell, who was the subject of many eighteenth-century fables, that did not explicitly identify as such. In many of the interpretations that Farr references, Campbell lives a heteronormative life and even has a literal harem of women. Farr attempts to get around this by using his term "cosmically queer" which is meant to denote a level of sensuality and anglicism that transcends human sexuality but, in my opinion, fails to make an accurate equivalency to the true queer experience, thus making Campbell an unsuitable candidate for this thesis. If anything, by taking a non-queer character and calling them queer with no contextual evidence, it almost detracts from Farr's point and makes him appear disingenuous about wanting the authentic queer experience to be represented. It could be suggested that Farr takes a presentist's perspective, or is deliberately misreading, and is trying to read characters in a queer lens to support his hypothesis. Considering how some novelists, like JK Rowling and Kathryn Stocket, have been criticized in recent years for trying to represent groups through their writing that they should not be writing "on behalf of," Farr would have been better off to not rewrite Campbell's character how he saw fit.

Despite these hiccups, Farr offers a thorough overview of the parallel use of disability and queerness in opposition to health and heterosexuality as a common theme in eighteenth-century British literature that was representative of the predominant social view at the time, and how it was also used by some forward-thinking authors as a way to challenge those views.

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AMALGAMATIONS: CATEGORY CRISIS AND MONSTERIZATION IN TRANSHUMAN SCIENCE FICTION

"The monster is difference made flesh, come to dwell among us."

— Jeffrey Jerome Cohen

Of all genres of writing, Science Fiction is uniquely fixated on the future. From creative visions of fantastic and incredible technologies, to the utopic *Star Trek* boldly going where no one has gone before, Science Fiction (Sci-Fi) inspires us to strive ever-forward towards the horizon. Perhaps surprising, then, the genre is also deeply rooted in history. Sci-Fi often acts as a mirror—reflecting back to us both our past and present moment, forcing us to examine our history, beliefs, and current socio-political landscape. One way in which we can use Sci-Fi to interrogate our present historical moment is to look at those who are cast-away, persecuted, or hunted—in other words, the monsters. Examples of "Monsterization"–the purposeful act of dehumanizing a person or group in order to justify their subjugation–can be found all throughout the various sub-genres of Sci-Fi, but perhaps the most tangible and relevant can be found in Transhuman Sci-Fi. The sub-genre focuses on such Transhuman elements as augmented humans interweaving flesh with technology, DNA editing, and the ultimate post-human—androids. And with each of these technological wonders comes new forms of inequality, distrust, and hate. In Sci-Fi, the Monsterization of the Transhuman can be seen as reflecting historically deep-seated fears of change: of the rapid transformations of technology, of the body, of societal norms, of the very ways in which we define ourselves as human beings.

TRANSHUMANISM

Transhumanism has been around in various forms for ages, but really emerged as a modern philosophy in the early 1990's alongside the digital revolution and rise of computers. As it is still a relatively new and niche philosophy, the genre is malleable, and the epistemological views among transhumanists varies widely. Among these scholars, Max More is generally accepted as the face of the movement. In "The Philosophy of Transhumanism," More defines Transhumanism as "philosophies of life that seek the continuation and acceleration of the evolution of intelligent life beyond its current human form and human limitations by means of science and technology, guided by life promoting principles and values" (3). In other words, Transhumanists believe that we are more than our flawed biology, and that scientific and technological innovations will one day grant us the capability of transcending our natural forms. These new humans at the final frontier of Transhumanism are referred to as Posthumans. More writes:

> By thoughtfully, carefully, and yet boldly applying technology to ourselves, we can become something no longer accurately described as human—we can become Posthuman… Becoming Posthuman means exceeding the limitations that define the less desirable aspects of the "human condition." Posthuman beings would no longer suffer from disease, aging, and inevitable death… They would have vastly greater physical capability and freedom of (physical) form… much greater cognitive capabilities… more refined emotions… (4)

Superhuman beings with the ability to alter their bodies and minds and become immune to death would seem to put Transhumanism squarely in the realm of fantasy, but the fact is that human beings have been practicing Transhumanism (and creeping ever-closer towards achieving Posthuman status) for thousands of years.

One of the defining ideas powering Transhumanism is that of *perpetual progress*, defined as "the commitment to seek more intelligence, wisdom, and effectiveness, an open-ended life span, and the removal of political, cultural, biological, and psychological limits to continuing development" (5). We can easily see the idea of perpetual progress throughout human history. From the discovery of fire, to the pyramids, to the Industrial Revolution, to modern medicine, humans have always strived to improve beyond their natural limits. A person as close as the 19th century would be astonished at the existence of sky-scrapers, the internet, and space travel, just as we today see the various end-goals of Transhumanism (such as eliminating aging, and even death) as far-fetched. The goal of Transhumanism is to steer society in such a way that the far-fetched becomes possible.

As mentioned earlier, Science Fiction is fixated on the future (we'll come back to its historical roots in a moment). One of Sci-Fi's greatest strengths lies in its dual role as both predictor and catalyst for future technological and cultural advancements (e.g., William Gibson's *Neuromancer* gave us the term cyberspace along with a vision of virtual reality and the internet before they were invented). As such, Sci-Fi can technically be considered always Transhuman in nature, though the particular subgenre that is Transhuman Sci-Fi hyper-focuses on this idea of perpetual progress and the consequences of pursuing

artificial evolution. Unlike the philosophy of Transhumanism, which is governed by a sense of "practical optimism," defined as "an optimistic sense of radical possibility with an insistence that we actively create the future we desire (10), Transhumanism as a Sci-Fi genre tends to function more as a warning against the unchecked use of technology for self-serving purposes. These consequences include inequality and bigotry as a result of new technology, and the risk of losing one's identity, individuality, or even humanity—of becoming a monster.

MONSTERS AND MONSTERIZATION

Before we delve into specific Transhuman Sci-Fi monsters, we first need to understand Monster Theory. In the seminal Monster Theory text, *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, Jeffrey Cohen posits that we can "read" a culture from the monsters they engender (3). He argues that monsters are never just monsters. Rather, they are reflections of the cultural moment in which they were created: "The monster is born… as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment—of a time, a feeling, and a place" (4). Therefore, by critically examining the monstrous "Others" in literature and other media, we can glean insight into their creators and the culture that propelled them to infamy.

An important facet of Monster Theory is the idea of *Monsterization*. Monsters are not just those which hide in the shadows and feast on blood and flesh; any individual or group can be ascribed monstrous characteristics and turned into a monster. The reason for this is simple, and malicious: "representing an anterior culture as monstrous justifies its displacement or extermination by rendering the act heroic" (8). Monsterization justifies everything from discrimination to murder by stripping people of their humanity. For if "they" are a monster, that must mean that "I" am the hero, and what do heroes do if not slay the monster?

History is filled with Monsterization, "but for the most part monstrous difference tends to be cultural, political, racial, economic, sexual" (7). We see it happen time and again, ranging from global to local. Slavery and the Holocaust are clear examples of the way monsterization works in horrifying ways. More recently, the beginnings of this malignancy have arisen through bakeries refusing LGBTQIA+ customers or concerning laws around transgender peoples control of their own bodies. Monsterization nearly always comes from a place of fear, particularly of difference and those who defy the norm in some way. Instead of being celebrated and embraced, differences are "quickly moralized through a pervasive rhetoric of deviance" (10), further stoking the flames of ignorance and fear. The Monsterization of BIPOC, women, and the LGBTQIA+ community are of particular relevance today and all are represented in various works of Sci-Fi, either directly or through metaphor (e.g., Marvel's *X-Men* uses superpowered mutants and the discrimination they face to parallel real-world racism, the classic Sci-Fi film *Gattaca* highlights the dangers of eugenics).

Hovering in the gray area between the wondrous awe of the possibilities of technology, and the cautious fear of what said technology might turn us into, Transhuman Sci-Fi brings with it its own set of monstrous progenies that can likewise be analyzed through the lens of Monster Theory. Throughout the genre we see many different forms of technology and the monsters that they create, but the genre always seems to circle back around to one of three: the melding of human and machine in the form of artificial augments and advanced prostheses'; the creation of androids, artificial intelligences, and other beings that look and feel human, yet with none of our biological weaknesses; and unholy amalgamations—disturbing hybrids of cobbled together parts and vivisection born from a desire to play God. Each of these inspire their own brand of fear and cautionary tales, but as with all Monsterization, they boil down to two primary fears: that of difference, and of change. This essay will focus on the creation of the aforementioned amalgamations found in *Frankenstein* and *The Island of Dr. Moreau.* I make the case that by studying the plight of these fictional "monsters," we can better understand society's hesitations with regards to technology and futurist ideals, clearing the path towards the Transhumanist goal of perpetual progress.

AMALGAMATIONS: THE ORIGINAL POSTHUMAN MONSTER

In 1818, long before Transhumanism emerged as a modern philosophy-proper, before the internet and high-tech machines, even before modern medicine as we know it today, Mary Shelley envisioned a doctor with a singularly Transhumanist goal—to, in his words, "banish disease from the human frame, and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death" (32). The quest for immortality wasn't anything new by Shelley's time, with the first recorded version of it being found in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* dating back to the 18th century B.C. Where Shelley's *Frankenstein* differs from previous immortality tales, and where it becomes truly Transhuman in the modern sense, is in her interweaving of fantasy and technology. Victor Frankenstein, like Shelley, takes inspiration from the old tales: "I entered with the greatest diligence into the search for the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life" (32), and combines that eager wonder with the logical Transhuman concept of perpetual progress via science: "none but those who have experienced them can conceive of the enticements of science... in a scientific pursuit there is continual food for discovery and wonder" (39). It is his imagination that allows him to envision his goal, but it is his grounding in science that allows him his success.

Shelley never quite states how Victor Frankenstein manages to animate his monster, saying only "After days and nights of incredible labor and fatigue, I succeeded in discovering the cause of generation and life; nay, more, I became myself capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter" (41). Though the classic movie adaptation image is of a series of complex machines harnessing lightning to imbue the creature with life, in 1818 technology was simply not sufficiently advanced enough to imagine any kind of real specifics. In any case, the actual method of his discovery isn't as important as the quest for and the attainment of the discovery itself. He managed to create life where none had existed before. Beyond that, he strove for more: "I might in process of time... renew life

where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption" (42). Victor Frankenstein was truly a Transhumanist, seeking through science the ultimate Transhuman goal—the elimination, or reversal, of death.

Of course, his grandiose plan goes awry almost immediately after it succeeds. He describes the creature, once animated:

> 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 luxuriance's only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same color as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shriveled complexion, and straight black lips. (45)

We can plainly see Monsterization in the language Frankenstein uses to describe his creature here — phrases such as "horrid," dun white sockets," shriveled complexion," as well as throughout the novel the creature often being referred to as "monster" and "wretch." Victor immediately works to Other the creature, highlighting every physical feature as monstrous, inhuman. The fact that he does not notice the creature's hideousness during the months before its animation highlights one of the primary images recurrent in Transhuman Sci-Fi—the scientist, playing God, so obsessed with his work that he is blinded to its dangers. He describes his obsession: "I seemed to have lost all soul or sensation but for this one pursuit" (43), and admits that while some part of him knew what he was doing was wrong, he pushed on regardless, like an addict powerless to stop the hideous work he had begun: "often did my human nature turn with loathing from my occupation, while, still urged on by an eagerness which perpetually increased, I brought my work near to a conclusion (43). A revolting creature born out of ill-fated obsession; it is easy to see why Frankenstein's monster has become a pop-culture phenomenon.

But the creature is no ordinary, brainless monster. He is sentient. He thinks, he feels, he even learns to communicate (and eloquently, at that). The monster speaks to his creator with a clarity and candor few actual humans would possess: "All men hate the wretched; how then must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things! Yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us. You purpose to kill me. How dare you sport thus with life?" (78). The monster at once recognizes his hideousness, speaks up in his own defense, and condemns Frankenstein with his philosophical question at the end. Between the creature's superhuman strength and speed, its vast intellect, and its (assumed) imperviousness to disease, Victor succeeded in creating a Posthuman.

The monster's intelligence does little to sway Victor's opinion, however. If anything, his intelligence makes Victor fear and hate him even more: "His words had a strange effect upon me. I compassionated him, and sometimes felt a wish to console him; but, when I looked upon him, when I saw the filthy mass that moved and talked, my heart sickened, and my feelings were altered to those of horror and hatred" (116). Even after conversing with him and witnessing first hand his intelligence, Victor's natural reaction to the creature remains one of disgust, his natural instinct, fear. These visceral reactions come about due

to what Cohen describes as a "category crisis" in Monster Theory. Speaking of monsters generally: "they are disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration. And so, the monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions" (6). In this case, the creature's hideous appearance is so at odds with his intelligence and eloquent language that it defies categorization, thus inspiring confusion, fear, and Monsterization.

In *The Posthuman that Could Have Been,* Margarita Carretero-Gonzalez posits that Victor's "obstinate refusal to locate (the monster's) humanness… blinds Victor to any possibility of considering the Creature worthy of ethical consideration" (54). By refusing to see any humanity in his creation, Victor feels justified in hating and abandoning him. Carretero-Gonzalez continues: "failing to recognize the face of the creature as a correlate Other in this first encounter frees Victor from feeling any ethical responsibility towards his progeny; after all, a 'monster' does not qualify as an ethical subject" (58). This touches on the crux of Monsterization—if the creature is a monster, Victor is absolved from showing any requisite human decency to him. At that point anything is permitted, from Victor's abandonment and hateful words, to the DeLacey's rejection and assault. Aside from Victor's moral failure towards his creation, Victor's bigotry betrays his own Transhumanist ideals. As Carretero-Gonzalez writes: "The potential of the species Victor heralded as a harbinger of a new era for humankind is unexplored, discarded, simply because it *looks* like a monster" (60). Victor not only fails his creation from a moral standpoint, but his Monsterization causes him to fail the ideal of perpetual progress and his love of science.

Of course the creature, in his rage and despair, does eventually fulfill his role of antagonist, murdering several people before vowing to kill himself once his creator dies. But is he an inhuman monster? Or do his actions stem from a very human logic? Between Victor's self-admitted addiction/obsession, the monster's eloquent and impassioned pleas for a mate, and the ultimately tragic fate of both, it is easy to see why so many critics believe the creator is more monstrous than his progeny. That is nothing new of course, but what is interesting here, in terms of Transhumanism, is *why* Victor is portrayed to be at least as monstrous, if not more so, than the creature.

Like many cautionary works of Transhuman Sci-Fi, the focal point of *Frankenstein* isn't the amazing discovery itself, but the ruin that such a discovery could bring about. In Shelley's novel, the moral of the story is clearly laid out by Frankenstein himself: "learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge, and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow" (42). The novel stands as a warning not to play God and intervene with the most basic, absolute laws of nature—everyone dies, and that which is dead must stay dead. Essentially, the exact opposite of what modern-day Transhumanist philosophy believes. Where the philosophy of Transhumanism works with the previously mentioned "practical optimism," *Frankenstein*'s warning is rooted in fear of the unknown. If man can reverse death, what does that say about everything we have been taught about God? What implications would such a discovery have for human kind? Would it save us? Or destroy us? Ultimately, Shelley's novel,

along with so many Transhuman fictions inspired by it, ask the reader: Is it worth the risk to find out the answer?

A DOCTOR AND AN ISLAND OF DEGENERATION

The Island of Dr. Moreau, by H.G. Wells, picks up Victor Frankenstein's mantle and depicts another instance of the Monsterization of Posthuman Amalgamations. The novel, written in 1896, reflects cultural fears inspired by scientific naturalism and degeneration discourse of the time. Through the character of Dr. Moreau, a (mad) scientist who conducts intensely cruel experiments on animals in order to transform them into human-animal hybrids, Wells examines the thin line between humanity and beast. Like *Frankenstein*, the novel asks the reader to question who the real monster is, and what constitutes a monster in the first place. And, of course, like all works of Transhuman Amalgamations, it stands as a warning not to play God.

Moreau's beast-people are another classic example of Cohen's "category crisis." Neither fully human nor fully animal, these creatures inhabit the liminal, in-between space of the uncanny. Not only are they unclassifiable, but "because of its ontological liminality, the monster notoriously appears at times of crisis as a kind of third term that problematizes the clash of extremes—as 'that which questions binary thinking and introduces a crisis'" (6). Their very existence causes Prendick to enter an existential crisis. Upon seeing M'ling for the first time, he is "astonished beyond measure at the grotesque ugliness of this black-faced creature. I had never beheld such a repulsive and extraordinary face before" (Wells Ch. 3). Further on, before they leave the ship, Prendick sees him again: "The thing came to me as stark inhumanity. That black figure with its eyes of fire struck down through all my adult thoughts and feelings, and for a moment the forgotten horrors of childhood came back to my mind" (Wells Ch. 4). M'ling, being completely alien to Prendick's English sensibilities, is read as pure monster, despite his harmless nature.

It is not M'ling's bestiality that confuses and horrifies Prendick, however. It is his humanity. Cohen writes: "in its function as dialectical Other or third-term supplement, the monster is an incorporation of the Outside, the Beyond—of all those loci that are rhetorically placed as distant and distinct but originate within" (7). By straddling the line between human and beast, M'ling and the other beast-people enter the uncanny valley, reflecting and inverting both Prendick's own humanity and savagery back at him in disquieting ways. This is to say that the beast-people force Prendick to confront the possibility that human and beast are more alike than he once might have imagined.

After the death of Moreau, Prendick goes to live with the beast-people and before long, becomes one with them: "I say I became habituated to the Beast People, that a thousand things which had seemed unnatural and repulsive speedily became natural and ordinary to me. I suppose everything in existence takes its color from the average hue of our surroundings" (Wells Ch. 15 1174). Later on, he explicitly notes the humanity in the beast-people, even as they begin the degeneration back to their instinctual natures: "A

strange persuasion came upon me, that, save for the grossness of the line, the grotesqueness of the forms, I had here before me the whole balance of human life in miniature, the whole interplay of instinct, reason, and fate in its simplest form" (Wells Ch. 16). Before long, Prendick himself becomes beast-like: "I too must have undergone strange changes. My clothes hung about me as yellow rags, through whose rents showed the tanned skin. My hair grew long, and became matted together. I am told that even now my eyes have a strange brightness, a swift alertness of movement" (Wells Ch. 21). He even later says that he "may have caught something of the natural wildness of my companions" (Wells Ch. 22). Clearly, Prendick's time on the island has caused an immense amount of category confusion for him, to the point where the line between beast and man blurs beyond recognition.

When Prendick eventually escapes the island and tries to reenter British society, he says: "My trouble took the strangest form. I could not persuade myself that the men and women I met were not also another Beast People, animals half wrought into the outward image of human souls" (Wells Ch. 22). Further, and more specifically, Prendick fears "that they would presently begin to revert, — to show first this bestial mark and then that" (Wells Ch. 22). And in a monologue near the end, Prendick states:

> I look about me at my fellow-men; and I go in fear. I see faces, keen and bright; others dull or dangerous; others, unsteady, insincere, — none that have the calm authority of a reasonable soul. I feel as though the animal was surging up through them; that presently the degradation of the Islanders will be played over again on a larger scale. I know this is an illusion; that these seeming men and women about me are indeed men and women, — men and women forever, perfectly reasonable creatures, full of human desires and tender solicitude, emancipated from instinct and the slaves of no fantastic Law, — beings altogether different from the Beast Folk. Yet I shrink from them, from their curious glances, their inquiries and assistance, and long to be away from them and alone. (Wells Ch. 22)

Prendick's fear is directly correlated to degeneration theory of the mid-late 1800's, which revolved around the racially coded "fear that modern European civilizations may be on the brink of a radical decline" (Ledger 2). Readers of the time would immediately see their biggest fears reflected in the eyes of the beast-people, in Prendick's transformation, and most importantly, in the ways in which the normal everyday British person was infected with a nebulous savagery that threatened total degeneration at any moment.

If the beast-men in the novel mirror cultural fears of degeneration of the time, Dr. Moreau himself mirrors the same tried-and-true fears of *Frankenstein* 80 years earlier—the mad scientist, utterly obsessed with his work, trying to bring about perpetual progress by force, with no regard for the moral and ethical consequences. One of the most heated debates of the time revolved around vivisection—the dissection of living subjects. Moreau's view on the topic is clear: "For it is just this question of pain that parts us. So long as visible or audible pain turns you sick; so long as your own pains drive you; so long as pain underlies your propositions about sin, — so long, I tell you, you are an animal, thinking a little less obscurely what an animal feels" (Wells Ch. 14). Moreau has numbed himself to the suffering of others and feels himself the superior human because of it. Further, Moreau continues:

"to this day I have never troubled about the ethics of the matter… the study of Nature makes a man at last as remorse-less as Nature. I have gone on, not heeding anything but the question I was pursuing; and the material has—dripped into the huts yonder" (Wells Ch. 14). Not only has he numbed himself to the pain of others, he simply does not even think of the ethical situation at all. In this way he is possibly even worse than Victor Frankenstein, as Frankenstein proves himself at least capable of feeling for his creature and understanding his own faults.

Andrew Bishop writes that Dr. Moreau, with his extreme disregard for the suffering of his beasts, "bears a striking resemblance to some of the more brazenly callous experimental physiologists who helped to stir up Late-Victorian debates in England about 'vivisection,'" (Bishop). This was, of course, no mistake. Wells was clearly influenced by the debate and the fears it stirred up. Bishop writes: "it is clear that Wells knew precisely what antivivisectionists feared: to quote the medical historian Rob Boddice, 'the brutalized scientist, inured to the commission of painful acts and/or the sight of blood'" (Bishop). Moreau does not really represent Transhumanism, however. Rather, he is the physical embodiment of Transhumanism philosophy taken to its worst, most twisted extreme. In this way, he acts as a kind of strawman for those who wished to slow down scientific progress, enabling and reinforcing the Monsterization of Transhumanism itself: "once the Moreau's of the world were granted the license to inflict pain with immunity, to kill in aseptic laboratories with cool indifference, who knew where this 'new priesthood of science' might lead…" (Bishop).

If Moreau's callous cruelty wasn't enough of a condemnation of Transhumanism, Wells takes it a step further and has Moreau literally play God. After casting out each of his creations for failing to meet his expectations of perfection, Moreau leaned into the beast-people's superstition, essentially turning himself into their God. Prendick experiences their religion first hand:

> I realized that I had to repeat this idiotic formula; and then began the insanest ceremony. The voice in the dark began intoning a mad litany, line by line, and I and the rest to repeat it. As they did so, they swayed from side to side in the oddest way, and beat their hands upon their knees; and I followed their example. I could have imagined I was already dead and in another world. That dark hut, these grotesque dim figures, just flecked here and there by a glimmer of light, and all of them swaying in unison and chanting. Not to go on all-fours; that is the Law. Are we not Men? Not to suck up Drink; that is the Law. (Wells Ch. 12).

These laws, of course, were instilled in them by Moreau as a means of control — to ensure that they do not degenerate into their primal selves and eventually overtake him. The beast-people even see his laboratory as their version of Hell: "His is the House of Pain. His is the Hand that makes. His is the Hand that wounds. His is the Hand that heals" (Wells Ch. 12). And Prendick names his suspicions explicitly: "A horrible fancy came into my head that Moreau, after animalizing these men, had infected their dwarfed brains with a kind of deification of himself" (Wells Ch. 12). Moreau is God-complex incarnate.

The Island of Dr. Moreau, like *Frankenstein* before it, was shaped by societal fears of the time. Scientific naturalism, evolution, degeneration, and the degradation of "pure" British culture and society are all reflected in the novel. That said, it is also clear that Wells had a more complicated view of the subject than degeneration reactionists. The beast-people, while representing fears of degeneration, were also mostly benevolent. They are possibly the least monstrous of all the characters, especially compared with Moreau and even Prendick, who does not hesitate to use the beast-people's fear of Moreau for his own gain. Wells challenges our assumptions about what it means to be a monster while at the same time still condemning the unchecked use of science without ethics.

LOOKING TOWARDS THE HORIZON

Sci-Fi is deeply rooted in and influenced by sociopolitical concerns — past, present, and future. Works of Transhuman Sci-Fi, in particular, reflect historically deep-seated fears of change and difference, pushed to the limit of our technological imagination. These fears, expressed in the form of Monsterization, tell us a lot about ourselves. And it is in that telling that we can find the monster's true purpose: "Every monster is in this way a double narrative, two living stories: one that describes how the monster came to be and another, its testimony, detailing what cultural use the monster serves" (Cohen 13). The amalgamations of *Frankenstein* and *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, along with their mad scientist creators were born from the fear of the transhuman and unchecked perpetual progress. Both works stand as warnings: to not play God, to not lose our humanity, and as reflections: of any person or group hated for simply being who they are.

Monsters, particularly those found in Transhuman Sci-Fi "bring not just a fuller knowledge of our place in history… but they bear self-knowledge, *human* knowledge… They ask us to reevaluate our cultural assumptions… our perception of difference, our tolerance toward its expression" (Cohen 20). Transhuman Sci-Fi, then, plays a vital role as we look forward towards a future where humans augmented with technology, DNA editing, and even sentient robots, may well become reality. The genre allows us to envision these futures, anticipate difficult philosophical and ethical concerns, and examine our own prejudices. Past and present coalesced into one vision for the future. Only when the warnings in Transhuman Sci-Fi and our innate fear of change and those that are different are addressed, can the philosophical ideals of Transhumanism be achieved.

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Haleigh wrote "*Between Mind and the Fist: Conceptualizing Superman in Fritz Lang's Metropolis and DC Comics' Retelling*" because the 1996 graphic novel *Superman's Metropolis* is a rare example of a comic adapting a film, not to mention one of the first feature-length films in the science fiction genre. The theme of restraint frequently plays in Superman stories and science fiction at large. Should we create artificial intelligence simply because we can? Artificial intelligence and androids in particular feature prominently in Superman stories–especially with Metallo, Bizarro, Amazo, and other villains, along with the hero Superboy, a clone with fused DNA from both Superman and Lex Luthor. For better or worse, artificial intelligence, androids, and other synthetic entities exist in the margins.

BETWEEN MIND AND THE FIST: CONCEPTUALIZING SUPERMAN IN FRITZ LANG'S *METROPOLIS* AND DC COMICS' RETELLING

For almost a century now, Superman, the Man of Steel, has entranced our comic books, movie screens, television shows, and wider popular culture. He becomes the butt of jokes, his iconography foundational for concepts of superheroism, and constantly misunderstood to be the sum of his superpowers. One of the most iconic speeches ever made by Superman comes from *Justice League: Unlimited*, the well-celebrated sequel to the smash hit animated show *Justice League*. In the speech, Superman provides a glimpse into his life living with these misunderstood and dangerous powers, a reality that becomes starkly relevant to both Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* and the 1996 DC Comics retelling of it by the same name, starring the Man of Steel.

For the context of the speech, Superman prepares to fight Darkseid, one of the few beings in the DC Universe who can match him in strength. "I feel like I live in a world made of cardboard, always taking constant care not to break something, to break someone. Never allowing myself to lose control even for a moment, or someone could die. But you can take it, can't you, big man? What we have here is a rare opportunity for me to cut loose and show you just how powerful I really am." (*Justice League: Unlimited,* 2006.) As I move through this retelling of *Metropolis*, the theme of restraint becomes more poignant, clear, and pivotal to both stories. This parallel study examines how the 1996 *Metropolis* graphic novel from DC Comics, which claims that the mediator between the mind and the fist is the heart, brings

new perspective and insight in reading the original 1927 *Metropolis*, directed by Fritz Lang and considered a classic of German cinema. By juxtaposing the central thematic elements of DC Comics' retelling of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* with the original film, we unveil layers of both Freder's motivations, his role in the piece, the urban animism of metropolitan areas in both pieces, and deepen certain aspects of the movie's *mise-en-scene* and the comic's composition of panels related to twentieth-century heroism and villainy.

For much of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis,* the city is shrouded in darkness, in vice and danger, where no virtuous person would willingly go for very long. Freder's presence there is seemingly only necessitated by his desire to improve the lives of his fellow man, to find the object of his desires, and to thwart the mad scientist Rotwang. "The hectic metropolis, the hunting ground of master criminal Mabuse, is represented primarily as a collection of hotels, nightclubs, cabarets with sophisticated stage machinery, illegal gambling dens, hangouts for prostitutes, and hideouts for counterfeiters. In this chaotic world Mabuse is an always invisible master manipulator who exerts total control. His power takes shape as an alternative urban network that stretches everywhere." (Jacobs, 386.) Despite the idyllic cityscape we as viewers are presented with at the start of the film, the rest of the runtime is spent showing all the proverbial chinks in this city's armor. It resembles a more primeval Gotham City, if that were possible, nocturnal and prickly.

Lang's Metropolis seems to be something of an egg–perfect, pristine white on the outside, with a barrier to protect outsiders from scrutiny, though we do not see much of how the city interacts with other bodies, governing or otherwise. Inside the egg, there is creative and destructive activity. Creation occurs with the feminine android Rotwang brings online, as well as the processes in the industrial sectors of the undercity that require so many workers. The destruction comes with the destruction of Freder's body as he takes over for the worker in the factories, in the symbolic destruction of the real Maria and the fabrication of the android, as well as the systematic sacrifice of people to Moloch, taken from the ancient demon of child sacrifice. The feminine android serves as a kind of creator and destroyer, causing men to murder, but also coming into a stagnant, oppressive atmosphere offering a new path, a creative one, out of their current stasis.

The etymology of the word 'metropolis' breaks down into meaning "mother city". However, the term 'mother' brings to mind how starkly masculine the cast of *Metropolis* is. Maria, the feminine android, and perhaps Moloch, a seemingly sentient machine in the film that workers are fed into to keep the city afloat, are the only women present throughout the film. Not to mention, the *mise-en-scene* for the first look at the android Maria depicts her in a kind of halo, very much like an egg. This is also true for the scene where Freder moves the hands of the machine, the mechanisms of which are clocklike, and he seems to be in the center of a circular frame, like a reptile racing against time to hatch inside the womb of the mother city. "In spite of the night's associations with escape and release, with frivolity, in fact the modern nocturnal city offers the individual fewer possibilities for escaping suffocating control. The mechanisms of control themselves add to the mysterious sense of threat of the night." (Jacobs, 383.) Those barriers presented by the egg metaphor, upheld by the ideal of the Tower within Lang's urban landscape, bring us

back to restraint and the idea of a Superman in possession of that necessary restraint in order to do his job.

To understand how DC Comics updated Clark Kent for the 1996 *Metropolis* retelling, it is helpful to lay down a basic understanding of the Man of Steel's mythos. Some thirty years before the residents of DC Comics' Metropolis witness a man who can fly, a young Kryptonian is born to Jor-El and Lara Zor-El, a married pair of noble scientists on the planet Krypton. The planet, depending on the continuity, is either on the verge of imploding or being invaded by an intergalactic conqueror and collector named Brainiac. At the last minute, Jor-El and Lara Zor-El put their young son, Kal-El, into a spaceship and send him across the galaxy to Earth. Krypton dies and Kal-El is, until the emergence of Supergirl, the last Kryptonian.

Upon arrival in Smallville, Kansas, Kal-El is given the name Clark Kent by the rural hardworking couple who find him, Jonathan and Martha Kent. On their farm, Clark receives an education in humanity–the integral moral compass, blue collar work ethic, frugality, and the importance of friendship, restraint, and above all, the importance of helping those who need help if one is in the position to lend it. This education, more than anything else, shaped who Clark Kent is. His powers played no part, nor the presence of Lois Lane as his primary love interest, but the upbringing he received as a result of Jonathan and Martha Kent finding his ship. All of these considerations, along with much of his adolescence and early adulthood spent learning how to control his powers – most notably his strength, carry into the 1996 retelling.

One of the more significant changes to the Superman mythos is the background of Clark Kent – renamed Clarc for the graphic novel. As he is a replacement for Freder, his father is no longer a blue-collar farmer, but an industrialist, ruler of Metropolis: Jon-Kent. The atmosphere of the story is also shifted, from idyllic city to a grungy, mechanical overgrowth of concrete grafted onto the surrounding buildings of the Tower of Babel, one of the few commonalities between it and the original 1927 film. It is described as having a "stream of light, which seems to crackle with coldness, breaks forth from all windows, from the roofs, and from the heart of town. When the sun sinks at the back of Metropolis, the houses turn to mountains and the streets to valleys. The searchlights, in all the colors of the rainbow, begin to play around the new Tower of Babel. And then the Siren sounds. Without being shrill, it penetrates all walls" (Lofficier, pg. 3.). In a way, the city becomes a rural landscape under the DC Comics lens. The man-made structures become natural environments under the cover of darkness, mimicking how the city darkens in morality once the sun goes down.

The line of DC Comics where graphic novels like the 1996 retelling of *Metropolis* occur is called Elseworlds, where the writers are given free reign to play with continuity, setting, and origin stories in this fashion. For example, to complete the short series of graphic novels where DC Comics characters parody these classic films, Batman is retold as a play on the classic vampire film *Nosferatu.* This non-canonical form of Metropolis is a significant departure from how the city was shown in Superman comics for decades.The

authors of the graphic novel, including Randy Lofficier were producing the graphic novel in the late nineties, Even in modern depictions today,the city is never so dark, to the point where Batman and Superman often remark on the pitfalls of swapping cities. For Superman, the lead in the gothic buildings littered across Gotham make it difficult for him to use his X-Ray vision. The point this yields is that while some aspects of the original Superman mythos are easily changed to fit the retelling, there are atmospheric shifts which distort the urban landscapes of not only Metropolis but how Clark Kent–Clarc in the retelling–interacts with his own moral compass, given the context of his surroundings.

In terms of *mise-en-scene*, the starkest difference between the silent film and the comic retelling is the use of color. It is obvious in the way that Lex Luthor's original hair color, prior to becoming the iconic bald supervillain we know him as, is bright red and kept for his dark counterpart to *Metropolis*' Rotwang. He is reimagined into Lutor, a grotesque, hulking figure, mostly bald, save for a mane of red tresses around the back of his head. In several panels, he is shown with crooked, rotten teeth, beady eyes like a pig's, and lives in a shack on the outskirts of town, in "an impossible shadow…Every year which passes in the city seems to creep, when dying, into this house, so that over time it has become a cemetery…a coffin, filled with dead tens of years. Its only other inhabitant is Lutor" (Lofficier, pg. 15-19). A man described as halfway between scientist and sorcerer, Lutor spends much of his time within the shack dedicated to the task Jon-Kent designed for him, very much like Frederson in the original *Metropolis*: to create a new artificial body for Frederson's wife Hel, whom Rotwang was also in love with. For Lutor, the same dynamic remains.

For canonicity's sake, Lex Luthor has no connection whatsoever with Martha Kent in Superman canon, but it does lead to an important point to make on adaptation and faithfulness to the original text, much like the arguments against fanfiction. Adaptation of any kind, official or delivered by fandom, only strengthens the text and the field of literary criticism at large. The critic is provided a chance to reexamine older material well-used to retelling and the societal and cultural timescape that filters them. Our analysis of these adaptations as critics, ergo, is primarily concerned with projecting these adaptations forward to discern their socio-cultural signature, rather than look backward to their source. "At that point, the act of adaptation transitions from an artistic/aesthetic/academic exercise to a vital cultural act. The task of the adaptation critic is to trace, flesh out, and process the ways that adaptation functions as that cultural act. In order to accomplish this shift, the field must move away from the one-to-one case study and toward approaches that center intertextuality and explore the dynamics and products of adaptive cycles as they spring from and feedback into the culture" (Jellenik, pg. 256). To that effect, while analysis of adaptation is important, it is incumbent upon the comics scholar to discuss intertextuality within the mythos, to perceive the socio-cultural signature. Within *Metropolis*, this takes a few forms, most notably with Lutor being Lex Luthor merged with another prominent Superman villain, Metallo.

In the original Superman mythos, Metallo is a cyborg with a kryptonite heart powering both his body and the weapon systems he uses to consistently attempt to kill

Superman. The issue with combining both Metallo and Lex Luthor is that the both of them already represent varying degrees of disability, depending on the continuity–Lex Luthor with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder or ADHD, post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD, and Metallo being a full-body amputee (Oordway). In other words, Metallo exists as a brain in a completely cybernetic body. In the 1996 retelling of *Metropolis*, Lutor is deformed (something also conflated historically with disability) and in possession of a cybernetic body, and a kryptonite heart. The utilization of the disabilities of two different supervillains into one perpetuates not only incredibly harmful mechanisms of ableism but succeeds in othering Lutor. From the moment we as the reader are introduced to Lutor, the graphic novel equivalent of the *mise-en-scene* changes. Whereas with Clarc we receive mostly darker tones, deep blues and greens and grays–the colors of Metropolis' undercity where the majority of the populace resides, with Lutor we are given stark, blinding whites and lighter colors, representative of the eggshell-like facade that Jon-Kent and Lutor are both attempting to shroud over Metropolis with their misguided, villainous ideations.

What the articulable changes between the original film and the graphic novel represent is the innovation of DC Comics and the iconography of 1927's *Metropolis* being a watershed moment in the history of popular culture for cityscapes and a concept in its critical infancy at present: urban animism. Urban animism relies upon the original animistic notion, being that all natural landscapes have spiritual energy as part of it. In ancient civilizations, natural features like rivers and mountains beheld a spirit, some of which were then personified into gods. For example, the spirit of the northward wind in Greek mythology was a god named Boreas. For the purposes of this paper, urban animism is the belief system animism relies on, only applied also to manmade structures like cities and urbanized areas. Skyscrapers, towers like the Tower of Babel in *Metropolis*, and other structures have inherent spiritual value. As they emerge and rise around Superman, they become a part of the adaptation, namely the socio-cultural fabric that surrounds him. As Metropolis became more idealized and modeled after New York (and Gotham City modeled after Chicago and Detroit), the more haggard representations of Metropolis were replaced with gleaming buildings and pristine sidewalks free of trash. Though, to understand this shift, a rudimentary understanding of animism is required.

Animism as a concept is traditionally more of a naturalistic view, something anthropologists have clung to in problematic ways since the infancy of the discipline. To begin, we may inspect the basic theories of religion presented by Martin Stringer, who remained intensely critical of E.B. Tylor, an early anthropologist and one of the fathers of the discipline. Among these criticisms of Tylor was his take on animism being a prerequisite for religion, a primitive philosophy required to yield other spiritualities–rather than being a religion all its own. Stringer showed that for most anthropologists, questions surrounding whether religion in general is "something not so much thought out as danced out…represented three distinct theories of religion–intellectual, emotional, or ritual–and it will depend on which theory writers hold as to which they will pursue. In reality, all religious activity involves all three elements, but even to say this only raises the question of priority. There is no obvious answer to this except to say that whatever answer we come to we must

not, as anthropology has tended to do, stress any element at the expense of the others." (Stringer, 546-7.) To amend Stringer slightly for the purposes of this essay, I would define animism as a religion that features ritualistic worship of the earth, natural processes, and all the inhabitants upon the earth, where the primary spiritual entities involved with humanity are the spirits (only occasionally deified, depending on tradition) of the land, animals, and plants surrounding the animist. Urban animism only moves a single step further and includes manmade structures, infrastructure, and cities as singular entities with inherent spiritual value.

Throughout the entirety of the Superman mythos and wider superhero literature at large, the cities that these heroic characters move through are personified. Metropolis to Superman is no less of a character in and of itself as Metropolis to Freder in Fritz Lang's silent film. Its spiritual value ensures that although none of us have been to Metropolis, regardless of whether we refer to the graphic novel or the silent film, we have an idea of what it would feel like to be in the undercity. We might have an inkling of the burning flesh as people are devoured by Moloch for the city. The reader might smell Lutor's ichor as a result of his metallic prosthetics and the kryptonite-esque material that powers the suit, the pressure from Jon-Kent, the desire to retaliate against the world in response to his own complex feelings about Marta, about Metropolis at large, and a certain degree of nihilism about the utility of the workers, whom he seems more than willing to sacrifice in the pursuit of resurrecting Marta (Lofficier, pg. 18-20.) Throughout the entirety of the graphic novel, we see a simplification of good and evil in this animist fashion. All that is good and moral seems to consolidate and follow Clarc wherever he goes. His environment darkens around him as if to, by contrast, show his goodness. Everything around Lutor lightens to show his corruption and immorality. The *mise-en-scene* grounds the divide between the two polarities of the story.

Although urban animism is a relatively new idea, many of the elements of it apply to both the Metropolis of Fritz Lang, and the Metropolis of DC Comics. "Animism is A) the attribution of subjective characteristics to the material environment, combined with (B) the assumption that objects actively and autonomously exercise influence over the human lifeworld, which is accompanied by (C) feelings of humility manifesting itself in fear, fascination and awe." (Aupers, pg. 202.) The way the "Mother City" is framed in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* is of a cold, bright white, pristine city on the top, but with a seedy underbelly fraught with corruption, human sacrifice, and misery. For DC Comics, *Metropolis* is much the same, but there is an emphasis on surveillance, restraint in the presence of great power. Both of these aspects present subjective characteristics to a manmade environment. Moloch, the great devourer of human sacrifices in Fritz Lang, seems to be usurped by Lutor's need to consume all power within his ability to subsume, present in the modifications he makes to his body in order to become more powerful. Lutor is the Moloch of the 1996 retelling.

However, it is the last part of the tripartite definition of animism that is most important to both versions. There is a rhetorical discussion of a great mediator between the mind and the fist. The mind, of course, represents all of our mental faculties, our

abilities of problem-solving and delegation, negotiation, and creation, for better or for worse. It is the vessel for Freder's decision-making and his father, Frederson's masterminding the switch of the Maria and surveillance procedures. It holds Rotwang's scientific expertise, his engineering capabilities, and his madness as well. It also holds all three men's capacity for rhetoric and argumentation, to mediate–which is the true crux of the movie overall. That being said, the methodology for how they execute their ideas and their mind's might is through the fist, through work, and chiefly, through violence. Only Freder, through the strength of his character, is able to show restraint. He has enough wisdom to understand that what Maria advocates for in the undercity is right, that the way the workers are treated is abhorrent, and knows that he would rather live as one of the workers than benefit, as his father has, from their labor and human sacrifice. That, more than anything, makes his character not only compelling but essential to the chemistry of the film overall.

In the 1996 retelling, the understanding from the start is the reader's acute understanding of Clark Kent as a character and how Freder mirrors him in many ways both in the mythos, and in *Superman's Metropolis*. Clark, too, is selfless, controlled, mild-mannered, and willing to shoulder any sacrifice he can personally make.. As we look back to the speech mentioned at the start of this piece, Superman lives every moment of every day in a practiced concentration to avoid breaking someone or something with the awesome strength his alien physiology provides. To use a more recent example to reinforce this point, the incarnation of Superman most present in modern popular culture is the Superman presented in 2013's *Man of Steel,* played by Henry Cavill. Over the course of the film, a Kryptonian warlord named General Zod comes to Earth to terraform it into Krypton and tells humanity to either present him with Superman, as the pair of them are the last Kryptonians, or be destroyed by the World Engine (a machine that will terraform the planet effectively killing all life on it to create a new world). Superman, unwilling to let his family and the rest of humanity perish, turns himself in to the American military in the process of being turned over to Zod.

While being interviewed by Lois Lane, to ascertain his true intentions for turning himself in, she asks him why he decided to surrender to Zod. Clark responds that he is surrendering to mankind. She remarks that he let them cuff him, despite all involved knowing that Superman could easily break out of the metal handcuffs. "It wouldn't be much of a surrender if I resisted. And if it makes them feel more secure, then all the better for it." Shortly after this, Superman reveals he can see through the one-way window his military 'captors' are using to surveil his interrogation with Lois Lane. In order to demonstrate transparency about the surrender, Superman casually breaks the cuffs and says, "You're scared of me because you can't control me. You don't and you never will, but that doesn't mean I'm your enemy." (Snyder, 2013.) This is the heart of restraint. Superman needs no grand demonstration of his power, in *Man of Steel* or in the 1996 *Metropolis* retelling when he finally receives his powers toward the end of the graphic novel. However, just as he needs no great demonstration of his power, that does not mean he is flippant, unempathetic, hubristic or arrogant towards his fellow man. The Kents found him, adopted

him, raised him, and thus, mankind became his kin. Though he must always show restraint in dealing with them, the way a human may concentrate to avoid smothering a baby bird, Superman in no way believes himself better or superior to his fellow man. Just as Freder, though the son of the mastermind of Metropolis, is no better than the worker he substitutes.

In some ways, Frederson and Rotwang, Jon-Kent and Lutor, all represent the ideologies that antithesize Clarc and Freder. Where Clarc and Freder are selfless and give freely, the mastermind and the mad scientist hoard in their avarice. Where they challenge oppressors, the mastermind and the mad scientist intensify their charges to achieve their ends. Where Clarc and Freder use the harsh realities of their environment to bring people together toward a greater good so that all may thrive, Frederson/Jon-Kent and Rotwang/Lutor use people as tools, discarding as many as necessary to Moloch or to experiments to achieve their ends that serve only themselves. Restraint and resilience, greed and mongering, these stories mirror each other to the end of presenting a man who strives for heroism and a hero who strives for humanity. By studying both sides of this coin, the underlying urban animism that brings the "Mother City" to life can be given meaning and vitality.

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A FREUDIAN INTERPRETATION OF FAMILIAL DREAMS IN THE *DEMON SLAYER ANIME*

When looking at the history of Freud's famous psychoanalytic theory it is quite clear that there are a lot of scholars reading into the Oedipus complex and yet there is never a clear focus on how Freud uniquely chooses to understand dreams via wish-fulfillment. Freud makes the argument that every dream is the fulfillment of a wish and even when a dream is disturbing such as nightmares or anxiety-filled dreams, there is still a wish-fulfillment, but the true meanings of such dreams are disguised(Freud 67). It is this unique importance placed on dreams by Freud that draws me into the world of the *Demon Slayer Anime,* a perpetual island filled with the dreams of demons and humans that reflect the nature of our reality today. Within the field, there are few papers written exploring freudian psychoanalytic theory in the Demon Slayer Anime, and within the few papers I've seen written on anime that exist, scholars like Raz Greenberg and Leslie Esther feel that anime is of a differing nature and that it cannot promote the authenticity of a real world. It's my greatest goal within this essay to use Freud's interpretation of dreams as wish-fulfillment to show how the unconscious world of dreams can provide a valuable safeguard for the hidden realities within the minds of characters and within ourselves. This paper seeks to reveal more about the essential work of dreams and their connection with psychoanalytic theory to provide a new understanding about Anime that fosters its impact upon conversations within the literary world.

THE SUMMARIZATION OF DREAMS BOTH IN ANIME AND THEORY

Dreaming - the facet through which every human looks at the world from their subconscious - is something that is seen quite clearly by Freud to hold a critical value and this correlates with how the *Demon Slayer Anime* is built on the dreams of characters. In fact, within every episode of Season 1 and Season 2, there seems to be some sort of flashback moment or dream combined with the memory of loss that each character experiences, that gradually reveals the essence of who they are. As the *Demon Slayer Anime's* characters have dreamlike moments, their true stories are revealed and viewers

are awoken to the suffering realities behind their strong existences which proves Freud's theory that every dream has a wish-fulfillment behind its existence. This paper goes beyond Freud's dream perspective to contend that all dreams are a result of a wish unfulfilled, which is the intense longing to experience that which was lost within the waking world of the conscious human being. It's this intense focus on the importance of dreams that validates a further exploration of Freud's theorem thus, leading to further works that promote the influence of dreams and anime within the world of academia.

When looking at the interpretation of dreams, Freud makes many comments on how to interpret a dream and within the first chapter he engages with the thoughts of many academics about their conception of dreams and yet cannot seem to find a way to agree with them(Freud). For Freud, the best way to understand a dream is to say that "The Dream represents a certain state of affairs, such as I might wish to exist; the content of the dream is thus the fulfillment of a wish; its motive is a wish" (Freud 67). Here Freud critiques a lot of scholars who argue that dreams occur because of biological processes and instead focuses on the reasoning behind the dream which allows it to occur and that is its central motive also known as a wish. It's this point about how dreams occur because of a desire to see a wish come true that scholars Raz Greenberg and Adolf Grünbaum reject in their own works on the theories of dreams and yet this detail is what makes Freud's theory about why dreams occur stand out, because it is such a simple explanation.

Freud's contention that dreams are a wish fulfilled acting as the general root cause of dreams is a claim that needs to be fully understood in the context of the one who created it and thus one must read deeply the examples Freud provides for how his theorem works. Freud starts by including his summarization of the famous dream known as Irma's injection where he dreams of a patient he has treated in the past called Irma who he meets at a gathering of guests and whom he critiques for not having accepted his "solution" (Freud 61). Within the dream, Irma replies with complaints of her own condition worsening that leads Freud to call in other doctors to examine her and then reflects on how in the past his friend Otto had treated her and given her an injection that led to her current state. Freud attempts to explain the dream in many ways by comparing the details of the dream to the things he has attempted to deal with in the waking world and it's this comparison that really proves his notion that dreams are a wish fulfilled.

Freud within his work, *The Interpretation of Dreams* breaks down how he interprets the Irma dream into distinct parts that coincide with connections to wishes he has made within the waking world of his life, be they past or present. Freud includes of the dream that, "What I see in the throat: a white spot and scabby turbinal bones. The white spot recalls diphtheria, and thus Irma's friend, but it also recalls the grave illness of my eldest daughter two years earlier, and all the anxiety of that unhappy time" (Freud 62). Here, Freud describes in his dream how he is examining the throat of Irma and finds a white spot bearing signs of a disease that reminds him of a similar illness that almost killed his daughter, and it's clear that the reason he has this dream is because he is traumatized by that experience and his wish for her to get better has shown up in his dream. As this quote admits, Freud's daughter eventually recovered from her illness which shows that Freud's

wish was fulfilled and this solidifies the fact that Freud's theory of dreams as a wish fulfilled functions even within the vulnerability of his own dreams.

Yet despite this, there is more to the Irma dream than just Freud linking back to how he wanted his daughter to recover. This thing of more can be seen in how he describes his fellow doctor friends who examine Irma as well. Freud analyzes these depictions sharing, "Dr. M is pale; his chin is shaven and he limps. His unhealthy appearance often arouses the concern of his friends. The other two characteristics must belong to another person. An elderly brother living abroad occurs to me, for he too, shaves his chin" (Freud 63). Again, here Freud makes a comparison between the real world and the Irma dream that takes place and, in this section, Freud imagines his friend bears the soul of two human beings and it's this unique detail that will have significance when one sees what Freud says next.

Freud continues by saying, "There must be some reason why I fuse the two persons into one in my dream. I remember that in fact I was on bad terms with them for similar reasons. Both had rejected a certain proposal I made to them" (Freud 63). In these details, it revealed another reason for the occurrence of Freud's Irma dream where he had a wish to make things right with the friends he was on bad terms with and imagined himself on good terms working with them to solve the case of a patient. It seems from this dream that obviously later Freud's wish to make up with his friends was fulfilled which led to such a circumstance appearing in his dream because without the wish being fulfilled, there would be no dream altogether according to Freud.

Freud dives even deeper into different aspects of what led his dream to occur and yet he still remains adamant that his dream occurred as a result of a wish fulfilled. He finalizes this end conclusion in his statement of how he summarizes his interpretation of the dream by communicating that:

> Meanwhile the meaning of the dream has dawned upon me. I have noted an intention which is realized through my dream, and which must have been my motive in dreaming. The dream fulfills several wishes, which were awakened within me by the events of the previous evening (Otto's news, and the writing of the clinical history). (67).

Within this finalization Freud shows how the Irma dream corresponds back to recent events that lead to him making several wishes that were fulfilled within his real life and then appear in the dream which are made clear by this quote that also extends Freud's theorem that dreams are not just a result of one wish fulfilled but many.

A NEW INTERPRETATIVE FRAMEWORK

Freud's theory that a dream is a wish fulfilled leaves several questions such as is the wish fulfilled in his dream or does the wish have to be fulfilled within the waking world for the dream to occur and it is these questions that have led to many scholars to ponder whether his approach has any value. In fact, sometimes the approach Freud uses to display his theory in *The Interpretation of Dreams* often contradicts itself as he writes truths and

then provides evidence that undermines the theories he claims to support. In Stella Sanford's article titled *Freud, Bion and Kant: Epistemology and Anthropology* in *the Interpretation of Dreams*, she notes the purpose of why Freud writes the way he does by saying,"But contradictions are not only logical problems that mar theoretical endeavor, but they are also (as both analysts and philosophers know well) interpretative opportunities" (Sanford 93). Sanford suggests that the beauty of Freud's work lies not only in the way it seems to have contradictions but in how these contradictions allow us readers to make our own interpretations of what he is saying to get the best analysis of what a dream is. However, while Sanford seems to appreciate how Freud structures his book this way, she also points out that such contradictions can be a flaw that may invalidate his work as he is showing the weakness of his theory by admitting such contradictions exist.

This gap of contradiction that Sanford points out opens the way for several new conclusions to take place about dreams including one that is hidden deep within the dreams of those in the *Demon Slayer* anime, which is that dreams are often a result of a wish unfulfilled and that wish is the desire to see things again that have been lost within the waking world forever. There is no better example of this new interpretative framework than to look at the dreams of those within *Demon Slayer* where dreams coincide with the loss of life characters have experienced which leads them to dream about their failed wishes to bring those things back to the waking world.
This conclusion about dreams is important because it shows how Freud's theory of dreams as wish fulfillment allows one to see that deep down hidden within the dreams of the Demon Slayer is a vulnerability that we can all relate to. Using Freud's theory here is different from other approaches written on the *Demon Slayer Anime* because it allows one to look at the D*emon Slayer Anime* not from the lens as just something to enjoy in childhood but as a moralistic representation of what reality looks like for some of us today. Freud's theory exposes the repressed memories we all hide within our hearts and opens up a way for us to heal and talk about the trauma we have experienced because we can now process them through his dream theory.

This new way to look at the Demon Slayer Anime through the lens of Freud's dream theory relates to how every character in *Demon Slayer* has their own private experience of loss that reflects our reality today because humans too feel the same as those in the anime. The connection made here between humanity and the dreams of those in the anime proves that anime is not just a framework for the impossible but a mirror of what reality truly is. The gaps of contradiction in Freud's work provide a stellar new way to reconsider what is real and what is important within the world of dreams and it's the literary quality of *Demon Slayer* that allows for a new conclusion to come about:dreams are the direct result of a wish unfulfilled from the waking world which stems from the desire to see loved ones who are lost in death.

THE STORY AND ITS LOSS

Demon Slayer is the animated story of a young boy named Tanjiro who works as a coal seller and while he hates the poor life his family experiences, he is humbled by the fact that someday he has a dream that it will get better for them. However, Tanjiro's life only seems to get worse as one day he is coming home and finds his family have been brutally attacked and murdered by a demon and while his mother and brother are dead, he finds a little sense of life in his sister Nezuko. Upon seeing a chance for a part of his family to live, Tanjiro springs into action and rushes with his sister on his back in the freezing snow to the doctor in another village and yet due to the conditions he stumbles and loses sight of his sister.

Tanjiro is unaware that the Nezuko he knows and loves is no longer there and has turned into a demon until she pops out of the snow and she lunges at him with the full intention of committing murder. Yet, Tanjiro somehow is able to appeal to the human nature of his sister and he yells at her to stop herself which she is able to do. This resistance shown by her inspires him to go on a journey to find a way to turn her back into a human. As Tanjiro is trying to reason with his sister Nezuko to not kill him, he encounters a demon slayer named Giyu Tomioka who tries to slay Nezuko but also seeing that Nezuko is different Giyu stops and suggests to Tanjiro that he walk the path of a demon slayer to find a cure for his sister.

Tanjiro agrees to become a demon slayer and goes on a heroic adventure whilst dreaming of wishes that will always be unfulfilled for him such as playing with his murdered siblings and mother and interacting with his little sister Nezuko before she became a human. These dreams that Tanjiro has and the dreams of other characters occur because they have many wishes that will always be unfulfilled within the waking world and it's these experiences that prove the new interpretive framework suggested within this paper correct and allow for a unique reading of the anime. By reading *Demon Slayer* through Freud's theory that characters dreams are built upon the fulfillment of a wish, or the unfulfillment of a wish, one can understand the reality that hides within the unconscious mind of a person, whist also seeing refuting the false claim by Raz Greenberg that anime cannot in fact be a reality of its own.

DREAM APPLICATION OF THE THEORY

The applicability of the new interpretive framework that dreams occur due to a wish unfulfilled which offers a way to look deeper at the Demon Slayer Anime, is dependent on how it can be proven true. What makes it true is that as characters have dreams of their past, they try to act on them which reveals the root cause of those dreams are unfulfilled wishes, illustrating how those unfulfilled wishes relate to the character's dream and how the content of the character's dream reveals that the unfulfilled wish is the reason why characters even have dreams. In fact, one must also consider these dreams as nightmares in a way because they reflect a reality that is no longer possible in the waking world due to the loss experienced there. It's this realization about the loss experienced through the dreams of those in the anime that makes a reader feel extremely human. The dreams of

those in the anime expose the loss that is hidden within the minds of each human being that we never reveal to anyone and as we can relate to their pain, this is what is meant by being able to feel human. The ability to make a reader feel is what the goal of a book should be and this anime accomplishes that which furthers the cause for why anime should be a field within the world of literature, not just a subset of film studies.

The first reason that proves that all characters' dreams within the anime are the unfulfillment of a wish is because as characters have dreams, they choose to act upon them thus revealing that those dreams occur due to wish unfulfillment. At first, the best example to begin with to prove this theory are the dreams of Tanjiro who experiences a lot of heartache within the first episode where his sister has been turned into a demon and whilst defending her against Giyu's attack he is knocked out which leads him directly into a dream. In the dream, Tanjiro's mother and siblings are depicted leaning over him and his mother says, "I'm sorry we have to leave you behind Tanjiro. Take care of Nezuko for me alright?" (4:47-4:33 Episode 1) This phrase is significant because at the beginning of this episode, Tanjiro speaks of a wish to take care of his family and in the dream, he has represented that wish because his mother is also telling him to take care of Nezuko.

Tanjiro tries to act on his promise to his mother to take care of Nezuko and he sets out for the house of Urokodaki, a former demon slayer trainer. Under Urokodaki, Tanjiro becomes a demon slayer but understands it's impossible for him to take care of all his family because they are no longer there anymore. Tanjiro's wish to take care of all of his family is unfulfilled from the beginning of the episode because his family have been murdered and they are no longer alive for him to take care of them and it's his action that reveals the occurrence of his dreams to be the bitterness of an unfulfilled wish. As humans, one cannot help but feel sadness knowing Tanjiro will never again experience the pride and love that comes with protecting his family. Tanjiros emotion within this scene promotes the reality of anime that many scholars like Raz Greenberg argue against and further proves the new interpretative framework that dreams are a wish-unfilled has value. By being able to look at why Tanjiros dreams occur due to this furthered application of Freud's dream theory, the depth of this anime is revealed which allows for it to be seen as not a childhood fantasy but as a case study on trauma showing that the real world consists of pain.

The fact that all dreams are based upon the unfulfillment of the wish within the anime continues to be supported as characters take action to achieve their goals and this unfulfilled wish is revealed within the events that led Tanjiro to achieve the coveted title of demon slayer. In Episode 3, Tanjiro is challenged by Urokodaki to train to cut a huge boulder and while doing this he meets Sabito and Makomo, unknown spirits who appear out of nowhere to teach him how to successfully crush the boulder. By crushing the boulder, Tanjiro is able to participate in the final selection process and become a demon slayer whilst the spirits and their secret fade.

During final selection, Tanjiro faces a giant monster that reveals the spirits terrible secret, within a flashback dream about Sabito and Makomo and the monster says that, "Those two, the boy's hair was an unusual shade of pink. A scar by his mouth. He was the most powerful

of the lot. The other one was a girl in a flowery kimono, small, not much power, but awfully agile" (7:22-7:10 Episode 4). The reason the monster knows who Sabito and Makomo are is because he killed those children and in knowing this sense of horror through the dream, one can realize Sabito and Makoto's unfulfilled wish to become demon slayers. This demon's dream occurs only because Sabito and Makomo perished whilst trying to achieve their wish of being demon slayers and further makes evident that dreams are a result of a wish unfulfilled. The loss of young life realized within a demon's dream is something one can find hard to cope with and allows us to feel empathy for those who have lost something that can never come back. This element of feeling something through a moral experience proves that anime is literature because it teaches us the kinds of lessons that all books eventually do.

In fact, this idea that dreams are the unfulfillment of a wish that is revealed by how characters chose to act upon their dreams can be taken even further as one looks at not only how Tanjiro dreams but in how Nezuko dreams of her family. In an article about Oedipal complexes and Artemidorus, author David Sick asserts, "According to Freud, the myth of Oedipus is "nothing more or less a wish-fulfillment—the fulfillment of the wish of our childhood" (qtd. in Sick 2). Sick's point about the myth of Oedipus being the fulfillment of the wish of childhood connects to the revealed occurrence of Nezuko's dream of her mother and younger sibling in Episode 9 as she fights for demons that she imagines are reminders of her childhood family who have passed.

Within the episode, Nezuko dreams that Tamayo, a female demon, and Yushiro a male demon is her mother and younger brother and she uses this ideology to take on the demons who robbed her of her chance at a happy childhood. The fact is Nezuko before being a demon was a happy child and wished to live that way and her dream of protecting her younger sibling and mother reveals her unfulfilled wish for a childhood cut short and this is only revealed as she chooses to fight the demons who threaten to take away the happiness she is trying to build in her new life. This fight by Nezuko in Episode 9 against the Temari and Arrow demon represents her taking action as a character inspired by her dream and proves the argument within this essay right that dreams occur due to the unfulfillment of a wish and as characters are driven by their dreams to take action, their unfulfilled wish shines through. Nezuko's attempt to deal with a childhood cut short by fighting for her right for a new life is relatable to identity within the 21st century because right now there are people too who feel robbed of their childhood and are fighting for a new future despite having unfulfilled wishes. In fact, it is this humanity of a wish unfulfilled that is exposed within the anime that offers a unique explanation for why dreams occur and functions as the powerhouse for a new argument that animation is the future of literature.

The final way to further drag out the reason of how characters taking action within the anime supports the idea that dreams occur because of the unfulfillment of a wish and reveals the wish unfulfilled can be seen in the character of the Temari demon who appears to kill Tanjiro and his sister within Season One. As the Temari demon is defeated and asks Tanjiro to play with her by giving her the ball, Tanjiro makes the unique remark to the demon that, "You probably murdered dozens but inside you're just a little kid" (9:58-9:41

Episode 10). Tanjiro shows remorse to this demon who has killed so many and is separate from her family and this moment will be important later as he goes on to dream of his family in a short vision which is sparked by his encounter with the Temari demon. Tanjiro remarks in his dream that, "No, never again" (4:13-4:06 Episode 10). Tanjiro makes this remark within the short vision like the moment after seeing the pain the Temari demon feels at being separated from her family, and this dream occurs because of Tanjiro's unfulfilled fear at becoming separated again from Nezuko. In fact, throughout the Anime, Tanjiro separates from Nezuko only once, when he leaves her with Urokodaki, a complete stranger so he can train to become a demon slayer.

Tanjiros decision makes no sense because his sister is a demon and perhaps it's this guilt he feels at not being able to fulfill his wish to take care of her all that time which is what leads his dream to occur. From his experience with the Temari Demon, Tanjiro feels the true value of family, which sparks the hearts of anyone who appreciates how important love for one's family really is. The morality taught here by this scene is representative of many major literary works and furthers the argument that animes like Demon Slayer should be treated with respect as they have the same capability to create meaning as other types of literary genres.

FURTHER APPLICATION OF FREUD'S DREAM THEORY

The second reason to support why dreams within the anime are a wish-unfulfilled can be seen in how the dream of each character relates in some way to the unfulfilled wishes characters make within the anime. An article written by Andrew Barnaby titled "*Coming Too Late: Freud, Belatedness, and Existential Trauma*" talks about how Freud's theory connects to trauma. Barnaby introduces the unique thought that, "though hardly explicit about it, Caruth appears to share with van der Kolk and van der Hart the Freudian notion that the traumatic remnant is something retained in the psyche as a record or trace of an actual occurrence" (Barnaby 5). Here Barnaby is trying to compare the ideas of other scholars on trauma. He points out that Freud has a theory that a traumatic remnant is retained in the psyche as a record or trace of an actual occurrence. This analysis helps to understand better that it is possible for the dream of each character to be tied to an unfulfilled wish they made within the anime because trauma has left remnants of the memory of that unfulfilled wish within their brain as suggested and proven by Freudian psychoanalytic theory.

For example, in episodes 12 and 13, Tanjiro is on a mission that leads him to encounter a strong drum demon named Kyogai who has dreams of his past which led him to become a demon that devours humans. As Kyogai fights Tanjiro he dreams of a man from his past unfulfilled wish of being a writer, where the man yells at Kyogai saying that, "Every last word is utter trash. There's no beauty, no fragility, no impact. Why don't you forget this fantasy of being a writer?" (18:15-18:12 Episode 13). Kyogai's dream reveals the incredible trauma he had stored up that Barnaby points out as a part of Freud's theory and it's the trauma behind why Kyogai was turned into a demon that reveals the unfulfilled wish that

made his dream occur; which was that he never got to become a writer. In this case, Kyogai's dream to be a writer was not exactly fulfilled in the way he wanted and it's clear that there is a tie between his dream and the wish he has had which further allows people to understand the fact that dreams are a wish unfulfilled. Kyogai's dream here also of being a writer but being stopped by an obstacle such as becoming a demon is relevant to reality because the reality is not everyone will become the thing they wished for and thus this connection proves that anime reflects reality and is the future of literary analysis.

The connection between the content of characters' dreams and the revealment of the wish they make within the anime that further supports how dreams are a wish unfulfilled can also be seen in a demon named Rui who again Tanjiro and his comrades are sent to eliminate in their duties as demon slayers. Madelon Sprengnether in her article "*Mouth to Mouth: Freud, Irma, and the Dream of Psychoanalysis*", offers a deeper way to look at Rui's dream of how he became a demon as Madelon shares that, "Freud's lengthy analysis of this dream leads him to conclude that the dream encodes his wish to disclaim responsibility for Irma's continuing symptoms and to avenge himself against his physician friends by casting blame for Irma's condition on them instead" (Sprengnether 4). This shifting of the blame by Freud within the analysis of his dream is like how Rui the demon shifts blame for what happened with his family and allows for a deeper understanding of the character of Rui.

In Episode 21, Rui in his dream states that, "Since the day I was born, I've always been very frail, I couldn't run and even just walking was a struggle for me. That is until Master Muzan appeared. My parents weren't happy about it since I had acquired a strong body and of course I had to devour humans. And for some reason, when it came to my own parents, they tried to kill me" (21:47-19:47 Episode 21). Rui here reflects on the sadness of his own life and unfulfilled wish to be born with a strong body so his parents could love him and when he achieves a strong body, his parents respond by trying to kill him instead of the love he longed for all along. The events that happened within Rui's flashback dream show a connection between his unfulfilled wish for a true familial bond and the reason he had the dream and proves even further that dreams occur due to the unfulfillment of a wish. The hardest part of watching this part of the anime is realizing the pain Rui feels because it is so like the pain many abused children face when they are starved of love from their parents and it's something true, we all can feel. The emotion that transcends this moment, is a lesson of heart and encourages parents to love their children for who they are which shows the superiority of anime because it's able to show more than just the shadows of reality that scholars claim it does.

HOW DREAM THEORY ENDS

The final reason that supports the fact that all dreams within the anime are the unfulfillment of a wish is because the content of the dreams they have reveals the wish behind why they have dreams. In her article, "On the Freedom of Thought, in Dream Life If Nowhere Else: Freud, Foucault, and Euripides", author Sharon Sliwinski observes something of her students that adds a lot to the conversation above that, "When I assigned

The Interpretation of Dreams in a seminar class a few years ago, a student queried me about one of Freud's remarks at the end of the first preface, a moment when he asks his readers to grant him "'the right of freedom of thought—in my dream-life, if nowhere else'"(qtd. in Sliwinski 1). Sliwinski explains that Freud included this moment to basically argue readers into giving him a break about the interpretation of his own dreams as he was put in a vulnerable spot and it's this remark that shows by exposing his own dreams, he also revealed a wish to remain unjudged in doing so.

This connects to how in the second season of the Demon Slayer anime, in the Mugen train arc, Tanjiro and his team are sent to assist the Flame Hashira in ridding the train of a demon, and later in fighting the demon its seen that the characters are drawn into deep dreams that contains content that is the reflection of their unfulfilled wishes in life. Tanjiro has a dream of being with his family, Zenitsu, another character has a dream of Nezuko being his girlfriend, and even the Flame Hashira is brought back to the relationship with his father and how his father treats him and his brother as nothing and refuses to train them due to the death of his mother. These dreams reveal the unfulfilled wishes of their users which supports the fact that all dreams within the anime are a wish unfulfilled and really drives home the point that these dreams offer a valuable way to see the potential of how theory can be used to analyze an anime.

It's quite clear within the conflux of dreams that exist within *Demon Slayer* that each dream can be tied to a wish unfulfilled or a desire for a wish to be fulfilled which that never works out in the way the dreamer wanted as their wish to have their loved ones back will always remain unfulfilled. This idea of dreams being a wish unfulfilled may have started with Freud but it continues and is supported by the fact that with each dream there is a character taking action to fulfill the wish they started with, that with each dream there exists a connection to an unfulfilled wish made within the life of that character, and the content of each dream reveals the unfulfilled wish which is the reason why characters have these dreams. It's this vast amount of evidence for the idea that all dreams are a wish unfulfilled which allows for a new analysis of *Demon Slayer* through the new interpretative framework. Overall, it must be known that understanding how dreams occur is important to healing the deep latent trauma within our hearts. This paper's sole purpose is to show how Freud's theory can turn the Demon Slayer Anime from the childish concept of an adventure story into a deeper case study about how the traumatic hidden undertones of its characters' dreams expose a deep connection to real life. The very act of writing this paper is a wish fulfilled, that someday there will too be more papers like it to further represent anime as an academic genre within the literary world.

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James wrote "*Lucy Snowe: A Siren's Voice and Nun's Silence*" as a capstone to his undergraduate study in English. James has always been interested in depictions of the entrancing siren and spectral nun, primarily due to their fascinating connections to women's sexual freedom or confinement. James has combined all of his passions into this one project by seeking to explore his interests and contribute, in a highly distinct way, to the larger discourse surrounding his favorite novel. By focusing on the connections between medieval theology, classical mythology, and French feminism within Charlotte Brontë's Villette, James proposes a unique, interdisciplinary lens through which to view the novel. When not working on academic projects, James can be found at home playing games or watching horror movies.

WRITING THE FEMALE BODY THROUGH LUCY SNOWE: A SIREN'S VOICE AND NUN'S SILENCE

> Now the Sirens have a still more fatal weapon than their song, namely their silence… someone might possibly have escaped from their singing; but from their silence certainly never.
>
> — Franz Kafka, "The Silence of the Sirens"

Since the dawn of patriarchal society, it has been the aim of misogyny to confine and restrict women's roles. Sexuality, chief amongst the characteristics sought to be controlled, has unsurprisingly been a focal point of discussion and male-centered anxiety regarding women's identity. To best combat this overwhelming male fear around female sexuality, stereotypical models and binaries have been enacted to police and constrain women. Specifically, I draw from the medieval era to uncover a binary that has remained quite hidden despite its powerfully charged nature. Bishop Leander of Seville, a Spanish Catholic figurehead of the period, noted that all women are sirens or nuns (Travis 39). With this comment, built from centuries of patriarchal monitoring, I argue that the siren-nun binary richly influences literary texts surrounding the concept of female sexuality. The siren, symbolizing sexual devouring and temptation, embodies the extremity of expression or having a woman's voice. The nun, a symbol of isolated servitude and virginity, represents the extremity of repression or silence.

Within *Villette*, the siren-nun binary emerges as a way for Charlotte Brontë to explore the complexity of female sexuality. Specifically, Brontë utilizes heavy water and

shipwreck imagery alongside the specter of the ghostly nun to examine Lucy Snowe's sexuality. In doing so, Brontë reveals how the call to duty and servitude can inversely unleash a torrent of pain and suppressed desire, where even a cry for companionship can become a siren serenade that brings about death. However, enacting the siren-nun binary allows Brontë to move beyond simply having Lucy be empowered by or confronted with a sexual identity and instead towards creating a "female-sexed" text. Drawing inspiration from French feminist Hélène Cixous, I argue that Brontë's utilization of the siren-nun binary can be seen as an effort to reclaim the female body and implement it into her text, creating her own form of writing that privileges women's bodies and voices.

From very early on in *Villette*, Brontë begins to enact the siren-nun binary by using water imagery to characterize Lucy's life. Specifically, the novel opens with her visits to her godmother Mrs. Bretton and the abrupt conclusion of her seemingly romantic life as a child upon returning home. After imploring the reader to imagine her living a happy life, Lucy mysteriously and vaguely reveals the death of her immediate family using oceanic and shipwreck imagery:

> However, it cannot be concealed that, in that case, I must somehow have fallen overboard, or that there must have been wreck at last. I too well remember a time—a long time—of cold, of danger, of contention. To this hour, when I have the nightmare, it repeats the rush and saltness of briny waves in my throat, and their icy pressure on my lungs. I even know there was a storm, and that not of one hour nor one day. For many days and nights neither sun nor stars appeared; we cast with our own hands the tackling out of the ship; a heavy tempest lay on us; all hope that we should be saved was taken away. In fine, the ship was lost, the crew perished. (Brontë 39)

Immediately, Brontë's description of Lucy's life begins to challenge the expected linearity of women's lives while referencing the siren-nun binary. Thus, Brontë will begin to oppose the concept of phallocentric writing, something that will become more apparent when later placed in the context of Hélène Cixous' work. However, I will first focus on the language found within this description of Lucy's life. To start, Lucy has to address the fact that "a great many women and girls are supposed to pass their lives something in that fashion," referring to living a life like a ship on a "harbour still as glass" (Brontë 39). Not only does Brontë reference another text filled with rich oceanic symbolism through this description, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, but she notes that women like Lucy are expected to live a life of ease and comfort. This noticeably calls to mind the privileges white women of her time had, but also highlights how women were expected to smoothly sail or experience very little during this stage of their life. With the juxtaposition of a ship on still water and violent waves claiming the lives of the crew on another, Brontë clearly implies the death of Lucy's immediate family and thus her peaceful lifestyle. This subversion of linearity for women to live a quiet life through the presentation of the shipwreck and violent sea allows Brontë to connect the siren-nun binary to the concept of female writing, or Hélène Cixous' "écriture féminine."

Beginning with the binary, the references to falling overboard or a ship being wrecked call to mind images of Homer's sirens, casting out their tempting song and

bringing sailors' ships sinking into the rocks of their island. This connection is only strengthened by Lucy's mention of the waves and storm leading to the vessel being lost and the ship's crew perishing, another characteristic of the sirens' victory over the sailors. Interestingly, Lucy mentions waves in her throat and icy air in her lungs, which suggests some interesting connection between herself and the sea. Of course, it serves as a way to emphasize the effects this shipwreck-like traumatic experience has caused her. Yet, her role as the sole survivor of this ordeal, in conjunction with this rather intimate consumption of the waves, puts her role as a helpless victim or unknowing harbinger into question. To build on this water symbolism, literary critic Mandy Swann, author of the article entitled "'The Destroying Angel of Tempest': The Sea in Villette," discusses how the ocean takes on both mythological and biblical symbolism grounded in Homer and the Bible:

> Oceanic torrents of passion and imagination have a siren-like quality in Charlotte's work: as in the Odyssey, they are beguiling and seemingly irresistible. Nevertheless, the restraint of these torrents of passion and imagination replicate God's control over the sea in the Bible…based around the presence and intervention of God's judgement and 'mercy' (Swann 146)

By Swann arguing that the waves become symbolic of violent siren-like passions but also suppressing theological judgment, the siren-nun binary begins to emerge more clearly in the text.

Lucy's intimate connection to the waves starts to place her into the binary by foregrounding siren-like consumption and passion. Yet, with each side of the binary representing mythology and theology, her link to the simultaneously mythological and biblical ocean calls into question which parts she embraces: the siren or the nun. In this way, Brontë establishes a strong connection between Lucy and the siren-nun binary, questioning her role in bringing shipwreck-like destruction. Importantly, this question of where she falls into the binary is one Brontë will clearly address by the end of the novel.

With this strong connection between Lucy and the sea, Brontë connects her emerging image of a siren-like Lucy to the concepts of female writing that Hélène Cixous outlines in her article "The Laugh of the Medusa." In arguing for women to reclaim their bodies and implement them into their writing, or écriture féminine, Cixous notes that current writing is too heavily aligned with male dominance and phallocentric thinking: "…that the act of writing is equivalent to masculine masturbation…" (Cixous 883). Most directly, Cixous points out that writing, a system created through patriarchal society, clearly will privilege men and their pathways to forms of "pleasure." However, this notion that writing is like male masturbation mostly calls to mind an image of linearity, where the writing reaches a climax after a clear, linear progression. With this interpretation in mind, Brontë strongly attempts to write the female body by utilizing the oceanic and siren-like symbolism she invokes with Lucy's past.

Specifically, Lucy's mention of how things should have been for a girl like her versus how they actually are suggests a discontinuity in the expected path of life. This discontinuity, combined with the lack of detail about the reality of her shipwreck-like

situation, can thus be viewed as an act of rebellion against male masturbation-based writing. Instead, her decision to break up the narrative of Lucy's life and withhold information creates a sense of disruption to the traditional male-oriented female narrative. This disruption combines with Lucy's characterization within the siren-nun binary to forge her into a, as Cixous identifies, "sower of disorder" within the novel's plot and structure. Thus, her potential to be a harbinger of chaos as the siren of her life and the disrupter of masculine writing within the novel's structure connects strongly in this early scene.

Brontë further complicates the siren-nun binary through the art gallery scene later in the novel. This scene offers an exciting insight into Lucy's view on both ends of the binary, critiquing both the siren and nun in exciting ways. While walking through a certain gallery, Lucy comes across two radically different paintings, "Cleopatra" and "La vie d'une femme." Beginning with the "Cleopatra" painting, Lucy notes its sexual and gluttonous characteristics:

> It represented a woman, considerably larger, I thought, than the life. She was, indeed, extremely well fed: very much butcher's meat—to say nothing of bread, vegetables, and liquids—must she have consumed to attain that breadth and height, that wealth of muscle, that affluence of flesh. She lay half-reclined on a couch... I should say, of drapery—she managed to make inefficient raiment. Then, for the wretched untidiness surrounding her, there could be no excuse. Pots and pans—perhaps I ought to say vases and goblets—were rolled here and there on the foreground; a perfect rubbish of flowers was mixed amongst them, and an absurd and disorderly mass of curtain upholstery smothered the couch and cumbered the floor. (Brontë 223-224)

Through this depiction, Brontë explores the siren side of the binary most clearly. Firstly, the painting bears the name of Cleopatra, referencing the Egyptian queen known for her sexuality and association with pleasure. Furthermore, Lucy notes how little clothing the figure wears and how she lounges about with various lush items surrounding her, indicating excessive desire. With the emphasis on being well-fed and her revealing clothing, the painting becomes a clear symbol of the siren identity of sexual consumption and physical devouring. Despite Paul Emmanuel quickly entering the scene and diverting her attention from such a "scandalous" painting to the second major one, Lucy does not praise the painting for its ability to represent sexuality nor sees it as a positive thing. Instead, she calls it a "claptrap" before being interrupted by Paul, indicating her own belief it is absurd.

This ability for Brontë to depict a highly sexually charged figure for women but not have her female protagonist view it as a positive thing further emphasizes her attempt to write the female body like Cixous outlines. Specifically, Cixous notes that women's sexuality, despite its lack of accurate representation, is not universal: "...you can't talk about a female sexuality, uniform, homogenous, classifiable into codes..." (Cixous 876). In this way, Lucy's refusal to fully accept the painting or positively see its open sexuality emphasizes that writing the female body means embracing many identities. In other terms, just because "Cleopatra" is such a potent symbol of sexuality in the text does not mean the protagonist must idolize it to feel empowered.

After being directed by Paul, she is forced to sit and view the "La vie d'une femme" painting. This painting, translated to "the life of a woman," exemplifies the nun sphere of the binary interestingly. This painting depicts a young woman traversing through four distinct phases of life. Specifically, the illustrated woman moves from being single to being a widow with a child:

> They were painted rather in a remarkable style—flat, dead, pale, and formal. The first represented a 'Jeune Fille,' coming out of a church-door, a missal in her hand, her dress very prim, her eyes cast down, her mouth pursed up—the image of a most villanous little precocious she-hypocrite. The second, a 'Mariée,' with a long white veil, kneeling at a prie-dieu in her chamber, holding her hands plastered together, finger to finger, and showing the whites of her eyes in a most exasperating manner. The third, a 'Jeune Mère,' hanging disconsolate over a clayey and puffy baby with a face like an unwholesome full moon. The fourth, a 'Veuve,' being a black woman, holding by the hand a black little girl…What women to live with! insincere, ill-humoured, bloodless, brainless nonentities! As bad in their way as the indolent gipsy-giantess, the Cleopatra, in hers. (Brontë 225-226)

The most interesting detail given about this painting is the lack of men in it entirely. Half of the painting consists of an isolated woman leaving a church and praying in her room, so the association with the nun part of the binary becomes extremely apparent. Yet, even with the second half of the painting containing children and a depiction of being a widow, Brontë still explores the nun identity.

The absence of a man in the painting and the depiction of a young woman holding a baby strongly call to mind the religious image of the Virgin Mary. The painting depicts idealistic womanhood from the male perspective, one where they can be confined to the role of a religious mother without any man's intervention or presence. The final part of the painting, depicting the "black" woman and child, references how women would wear black when widowed. Yet, wearing black and being depicted with children parallels the life of a nun very powerfully. Despite not being their own, nuns are often associated with caring for children and teaching them, something Lucy herself does for Madame Beck at what once was an old convent. In this way, the "La vie d'une femme" painting goes far beyond being a symbol of the oppressive nature of women's roles as young and devout mothers but instead can be seen as an attempt by Brontë to exemplify the identity of nunhood. This connection to the nun symbol contrasts with the siren-like character of "Cleopatra," placing Lucy physically and mentally in the middle of the binary.

The gallery scene allows for Brontë to have Lucy visually see the two ends of the binary and comment on both, revealing a disdain for embracing either entirely in the quote above. Yet, despite her disapproval of both paintings, Lucy still glances over to the "Cleopatra" and Paul viewing it: "I veered round, and surveyed the gallery. A perfect crowd of spectators was by this time gathered round the Lioness from whose viciniage I had been banished…he looked at the picture himself quite at his ease, and for a very long while…" (Brontë 226). Through this, Brontë notes the siren-like power the "Cleopatra" seems to have, pulling in the attention of all in the gallery even if they disapprove of it. Additionally, Lucy further comments on the painting when describing to the reader how Count de Hamal

views it, comparing her to what is perhaps the most powerful symbol of love within mythology: “I observed him for about ten minutes, and perceived that he was exceedingly taken with this dusk and portly Venus of the Nile” (Brontë 229). In this way, the woman depicted in the “Cleopatra” painting becomes like the goddess of love and sexuality Venus or Aphrodite. Thus, she becomes a powerful symbol for the sexual siren, especially since it is Lucy who calls the painting this.

Yet, even the repulsion the painting causes allows for Brontë to depict an aspect of écriture féminine Cixous would later outline. Specifically, the simultaneous interest in and aversion to the "Cleopatra" painting stems from its racial otherness. In discussing it, Lucy degradingly calls it a "gipsy-giantess," and Dr. John uses the term "mulatto” to further deprecate her image compared to his obsession at the time, Ginevra. In this way, the depiction of the woman within "Cleopatra" exemplifies in a literal way Cixous' identification of écriture féminine with "blackness": "...they can be taught that their territory is black: because you are Africa, you are black. Your continent is dark. Dark is dangerous" (Cixous 878). Immediately, Cixous utilizes the image of Africa and the "dark" continent to symbolize the untapped potential of women's writing and expression. In doing so, she grounds the status of women's otherness in alignment with racial otherness. Thus, Cixous calls attention to the reality that white male patriarchy oppresses all factions outside of itself.

Cixous' description here seems to present itself in a seemingly racist manner by drawing on the concept of a "dark" and "unexplored" continent shrouded in darkness. This alone may seem to diminish racial otherness and make it appear that women must essentially "colonize" their own "dark continent" to express themselves. Yet, it is crucial to note that Cixous emphasizes a sense of being "unexplored" rather than uninhabited. In fact, Cixous addresses this seemingly racist ideology by clearly highlighting that white men have truly created this image of the "unexplored continent": "The Dark Continent is neither dark nor unexplorable. –It is still unexplored only because we've been made to believe it was too dark to be explorable. And because they want to make us believe that what interests us is the white continent..." (Cixous 884-885). In this way, Cixous emphasizes the attempts of patriarchal white society to confine women's expression by categorizing it as a dangerous and unknown entity. In this way, women would not be "colonizing" their own "dark continent," a construct of white patriarchy, but instead embracing the power of expression they already possess.

Thus, Brontë's use of the "Cleopatra" painting as a disruptive force in the novel can be seen as a clever fusion of both the literal and symbolic "blackness" that exists in opposition to the "white continent" of patriarchy. By using the image of Cleopatra, Brontë uses the single most potent symbol of the fusion between racial and gendered otherness. Although Cleopatra's identity was embedded heavily in a patriarchal society, this reality allows Brontë to craft such a powerful symbol. Cleopatra was not only a vital sign of empowered racial and gendered otherness. She also represented that even that which the patriarchy believed it controlled or "explored", could still become opposition. This concept is distinctly visible in how Brontë's "Cleopatra" painting becomes a force of disruption to the characters around it, despite it being in a "controlled" gallery space. Therefore,

Cleopatra symbolizes the ultimate unleashing of the "dark continent" and layered "blackness" of women's expression. Thus, Brontë's use of Cleopatra interestingly highlights elements of Cixous's call to embrace "darkness" in a very interesting way.

This siren-like enthrallment also emphasizes the disruptive power the painting has on the plot and novel structure, taking the attention of all around in, even when they don't fully understand it. Thus, it serves as a literalized symbol of écriture féminine, disrupting the gallery scene and drawing the attention of character and reader alike due to its radically different and somewhat unexplainable presence of femininity and sexuality within the plot and text. It also serves as a reminder that to embrace écriture féminine, one must reclaim a woman's body and write through it. This is something Brontë aligns more closely with the disruptive power of the siren and utilizes without explicitly mentioning actual physical, sexual activity at all, severely challenging Cixous' view on écriture féminine.

After placing Lucy in the middle of the siren-nun binary with relatively low risk in the art gallery, Brontë casts Lucy more powerfully into it with the emergence of the spectral nun. Earlier in the novel, after Lucy establishes her more permanent residency at Madame Beck's pensionnat, she reveals that Madame's home used to be a convent. She notes that a legend is told about a particular dead fruit tree above a revealed black slab in the ground: "The legend went…that this was the portal of a vault, imprisoning deep beneath that ground…the bones of a girl whom monkish conclave of the drear middle ages had here buried alive, for some sin against her vow" (Brontë 117-118). Lucy goes on to express how people believe this woman still haunts the area, being seen in her black-and-white habit. Most interestingly, the legend told by Lucy does not name which vows the nun broke. Still, Brontë's emphasis on being buried alive and Lucy's future own interactions with the ghostly nun imply that chastity, and thus embraced sexuality, are the cause for the nun's demise.

The first direct association between the nun and repressed sexuality emerges as Lucy seeks to read her letter from Dr. John. Following her increasing infatuation with him, Lucy decides the garret or attic is the best place to indulge in her letter from Dr. John secretly. While describing the feelings reading Dr. John's friendly letter invokes, Brontë begins to challenge the binary by having Lucy comment on her feelings in a way that ties her to an identity she previously ridiculed: "The poor English teacher in the frosty garret, reading by a dim candle guttering in the wintry air, a letter simply good-natured - nothing more: though that good-nature then seemed to me god-like - was happier than most queens in palaces" (Brontë 272). Thus, before Lucy has her first encounter with the nun, reading Dr. John's letter presents a god-like energy making her feel happier than a queen. This reference to god-like emotion and queendom allows Brontë to associate Lucy's expression of emotion closely with that of Cleopatra, the figure for whom the painting she previously observed was named. Cleopatra was believed to be the incarnation of the goddess Isis and, of course, was queen. In this way, despite Lucy's repulsion from the "Cleopatra" painting, her emotional state upon reading Dr. John's letter mimics that of the Egyptian queen. Her god-like passion and joy directly oppose her denial of the painting, suggesting that Lucy embodies the binary's siren sphere even if she believes she isn't.

Again, this calls to mind Cixous' emphasis on female sexuality taking radically diverse forms, meaning Lucy can be the siren without being an overtly sexual woman. Simply hiding away in the garret to read her letter transforms what should be nun-like isolation into siren-like yearning and an average-friendly letter into passionate emotion.

It is unsurprising, then, that the first appearance of the nun comes after Lucy unknowingly embodies an altered form of sexuality she previously ridiculed. Suddenly alarmed by a sense of someone's presence and turning with her candlelight, Lucy illuminates the figure of the nun: "I saw the middle of that ghostly chamber a figure all black or white; the skirts straight, narrow, black; the head bandaged, veiled, white…an image like - a NUN" (Brontë 273). Thus, amidst her indulgence in one sphere of the binary, the other emerges to haunt Lucy. It is as though embracing one cast the other in existence even more. The four subsequent hauntings of the nun then can be seen as that sphere of the binary's attempt to regain control over the other, attempting to cast Lucy back into the middle. Therefore, Brontë now shifts the presentation of the siren-nun binary in the text. From a woman trapped in the middle, Lucy begins to cast her sights on love and thus conjures up the spirit of the ghostly nun.

This sudden and strange emergence of a ghostly nun in the middle of this novel resembles the aspects of non-linearity and disruption that Cixous categories as essential to écriture féminine. In this way, the suppressed and repressed sexual identity of women, embodied through the vow-breaking spectral nun, emerges to wreak havoc on Lucy for attempting to break free from isolation. It is as though a seemingly tangible battle begins to emerge between expression and repression, allowing Brontë to use the symbol of repressed desire in the plot to symbolize the disruptive power of women's writing in terms of structure. In its almost paradoxical nature, the nun's disruption serves as a negative challenge to Lucy's emerging sexual identity plot-wise while simultaneously positively representing the emergence of female sexuality in terms of novel structure.

To better explore this challenge of the male lens through the nun's presence in the novel as a disruptive force, Brontë masterfully utilizes Dr. John's response to Lucy's encounter. After relaying her vision to Dr. John, he immediately discredits her story: 'I think it a case of spectral illusion: I fear following on and resulting from long-continued mental conflict'" (Brontë 278). In this way, Dr. John blames Lucy's perceived encounter with the ghostly nun on her declined mental health. Through this reaction, Brontë masterfully shows how the nun has become a symbol for disruptive female-sexed writing and thus Dr. John's dismissal of Lucy as an attempt to restore order within the novel. Dr. John's persistence that she merely imagined the nun serves as an attempt for the male influence to bring order back to the plot and novel structure, remove the nun's disruptive image, and cast the novel back on its linear progression. And in doing so, it is an attempt to prevent the battle between expression and repression, siren and nun, and Lucy and ghost. Ultimately, it is an attempt to keep Lucy in the middle of the binary and thus to keep her back in the gallery that Dr. John himself physically brought her to earlier and now seeks to do again mentally.

Almost as though following a set pattern, Brontë again invokes siren imagery through depictions of water and Cleopatra before the nun next visits Lucy. After panicking over the loss of her letters from Dr. John, Lucy recognizes his shifted interest and affection towards Polly. Yet, how she chooses to describe this shift displays Brontë's continued interest in siren-like imagery: "That goodly river on whose banks I had sojourned, of whose waves a few reviving drops had trickled to my lips…but I loved my Rhine, my Nile; I had almost worshipped my Ganges…" (Brontë 326). Through this depiction, Lucy compares Dr. John's affection for water, invoking images of England, India, and, most interestingly, Egypt. Her desire to claim his attention as "my Nile" again aligns her embodiment of sexuality with that of Cleopatra, calling back to her calling the painting "Venus of the Nile". Furthermore, her mention of waves and consumption from the mouth calls back to the opening imagery of the shipwreck discussed earlier. In this way, Lucy is again expressing her emerging sexuality with images of consumption and water, both relating to the siren-like "Cleopatra," especially with the emphasis on consumption and Lucy's comments regarding the painted figures' gluttonous appearance.

After again claiming a sense of identity grounded in the siren sphere of the binary, Lucy decides to bury the five letters she has from Dr. John. This act of keeping the letters secretively and then seeking to bury them permanently to avoid further tampering with them by others appears to flip the dynamic Cixous describes in her article. Cixous outlines how female writing, at the time of her writing "The Laugh of the Medusa," had remained hidden from others just like female masturbation: "…because it was in secret, and because you punished yourself for writing because you didn't go all the way, or because you wrote irresistibly, as when we would masturbate in secret, not to go further… just enough to take the edge off" (Cixous 877). In this way, Brontë flips the concept of female and male writing strongly within her novel. Specifically, the writing of a man, Dr. John's letters, takes the place of her own. The reader never gets to read Lucy's letters to him in return, both the more sexually charged pre-edited versions nor the tamed-down sent ones. Although this appears to be against Cixous' description of écriture féminine by hiding female sexuality, Brontë's interest in keeping Dr. John's letters secretive and buried shifts the focus from her letters to his own. This shift places men's writing in the confinement of secrecy, turning Cixous' concept of secretive women's writing upside down. In other terms, Lucy's desire to bury and hide Dr. John's letters confines the writing of men, not women, to the constraints of secrecy and shame.

After burying the letters above where the nun was supposedly buried, the figure appears to Lucy again. Unlike the last time, when she was filled with fear, Lucy is even more empowered this time. She attempts to touch the specter: "…to fill the post and do the work of courage, I advanced one step. I stretched out my hand, for I meant to touch her. She seemed to recede. I drew nearer: her recession, still silent, became swift" (Brontë 330). In this way, burying the letters did not rectify the imbalanced siren-nun binary within the text. Instead, it only granted Lucy more courage and further conjured up the nun's spirit. Yet, the nun's recession from Lucy highlights a shift in their power dynamic. In essence, burying the letters of a man has granted Lucy power of a spirit of repressed desire,

highlighting how by Brontë removing privilege from men's writing by confining it to secrecy or burial, she has given Lucy power within the plot to approach the symbol of sexual repression before her.

The final confrontation between Lucy and the nun is one Brontë uses to further complicate the novel's siren-nun binary and, thus, her early concept of écriture féminine. As outlined before, Lucy's last encounter with the nun is preceded by her interaction with symbols of Egypt, invoking the image of the siren of the binary and "dark continent" of écriture féminine. As Lucy stumbles through Villette under the influence of a sedative, she walks through the fête in a hallucinatory-like state. It is in this state that she notes how the area around her resembles Egypt: "...a region, not of trees and shadow, but of strangest architectural wealth—of altar and of temple, of pyramid, obelisk, and sphinx: incredible to say, the wonders and the symbols of Egypt teemed throughout the park of Villette" (Brontë 500). Whether or not the area around her contained such symbols is debatable due to her sedated state, yet the importance of Egyptian symbols does not falter either way. Again, Brontë prefaces an encounter with the nun by having Lucy engage with symbols of Egypt, refocusing her identity amidst those symbols with the siren-like "Cleopatra" painting. It is almost as if the painting itself has a siren's voice echoing through the pages of the novel, again contributing to a disruptive structure.

Upon returning home and believing Paul Emmanuel will marry the heiress Justine Marie, whose namesake is the person Lucy thought the ghostly nun was, she enters her room to see the image of the nun spread across her bed. Lucy, empowered from her journey and sedated state, unleashed an attack on the nun that powerfully replicates that of a siren:

> A cry at this moment might have ruined me...In a moment, without exclamation, I had rushed on the haunted couch; nothing leaped out, or sprung, or stirred; all the movement was mine, so was all the life, the reality, the substance, the force; as my instinct felt. I tore her up—the incubus! I held her on high—the goblin! I shook her loose—the mystery! And down she fell—down all around me—down in shreds and fragments—and I trode upon her. (Brontë 519)

This attack sequence draws most clearly on the depiction of Homer's sirens and their bird-like depiction. Taking that association one step further, Brontë notes Lucy does not "cry." Unlike Homer's sirens, who were depicted using their cry or voice, Brontë adapts their image and instead focuses on their ability to fly and tear. Replicating their flight, Lucy leaps towards the idea of the nun and begins tearing the figure apart, symbolically using her siren talons to tear the nun apart. With an emphasis on the nun falling "down in shreds and fragments," the connection to talons or claws becomes even more prevalent. Even more directly, she openly states that she "tore" the figure apart.

This attack sequence ends with her realizing the figure she just destroyed was merely the nun's habit, with no ghost or person inhabiting it. Lucy then discovers a note informing her that the ghostly nun will no longer haunt Madame Beck's pensionnat. It is later revealed that there was no ghost at all, and instead, Count de Hamal used the nun's

attire to sneak in and meet with Ginvera. However, this detail does not lessen the symbolism of the nun for Lucy and only further establishes Brontë's take on écriture féminine. Specifically, she highlights how men will pervert the systems they create by using them for their gain. However, Brontë also flips the notion of male-focused writing by literalizing the embodiment of what Cixous defines as taking on a "paper penis" (Cixous 883). To elaborate, the nun's presence in the novel can be seen as a disruptive force to the narrative structure and, thus, a challenge to phallocentric writing. If this is the case, Count de Hamal's use of the habit can be analogous to women taking on the "paper penis" when writing in the phallocentric system. Thus, Count de Hamal is claiming the opposite of the "paper penis," becoming a man embracing the women-centered identity of expression, interestingly silencing himself to gain an outlet for sexual expression with Ginevra, using a nun's silence as a means to achieve a voice in that sense.

Literary critic Tonya Edgren-Bindas suggests that with the destruction and removal of the figure of the nun, Lucy herself replaces her: "Lucy Snowe is the only nun left to haunt the pensionnat. Throughout the five visitations, she has become the very thing she feared" (Edgren-Bindas 256). Although convincingly arguing that Lucy embodies the nun by highlighting her nun-like characteristics, Edgren-Bindas' absolute confinement of Lucy to the role of a nun is not the only possibility offered by Brontë. Yes, it appears Brontë does arrive at the notion that Lucy has become the thing she has feared, but that identity is not that of the sexually repressed nun, as Edgren-Bindas points to. Instead, one must recall the legend of the nun discussed previously in the novel. When placed within that legend, specifically the allusion to the nun having been buried due to breaking a vow of chastity, the distinction between siren and nun becomes heavily blurred. Thus, should the nun have truly broken her vow of celibacy as Brontë pushes the reader towards Lucy's encounters all being sexually motivated, something Edgren-Bindas points out, Lucy's doubling can be a claim of the siren identity masqueraded in the nun's image. In other words, the nun was always a symbol of sexual promiscuity as she could only be a haunting specter due to her broken vow. In this way, Lucy has become the thing she feared or was disgusted by. She has indeed become the thing she ridiculed but couldn't help but look away from. She has become the siren, the enthralling aspect of the "Cleopatra" painting she could not break free from.

Brontë only confirms Lucy's claim of the siren identity by ending the novel with two significant moments. Firstly, Lucy finally unleashes the "cry" she could not even muster up against the image of the nun, perhaps now explained metaphorically by the nun's compromised identity as a vow breaker and thus akin to a siren. Lucy did call the nun "succubus" in her destruction scene, again connecting her image to that of a sexually invasive entity rather than a repressive one. This way, perhaps Lucy's "cry" would not work on a fellow siren; only the physical attacks of talons and trampling would. Regardless, Brontë finally has Lucy unleash her siren cry on the one man she has finally connected somewhat sexually to, Paul. Through the tension of believing Paul will leave for the West Indies without saying goodbye, Lucy unleashes an uncharacteristic cry: "My heart will break!" (Brontë 530). Thus, in the wake of the nun's demise, Lucy embraces the siren

sphere of the binary and unleashes a voice previously locked away from the narrative. Not only does this emphasize the siren-like nature of Lucy, but it also contributes to Brontë's early take on écriture féminine by having Lucy find her voice and unleash it, noticeably altering the flow of the narrative structure. She finds her voice, a voice of female sexual desire and yearning.

The once unassuming and seemingly silent Lucy breaks the flow of the narrative and unleashes her cry for companionship. This may be the most tragic part of the siren-nun binary. Even when the suppressive sphere of it is conquered, embracing the other end does not grant gratification. Instead, her siren cry marks Paul for death and ensures that their potential union will never occur. Like a siren's call, Paul answers and begins to give his entire being to Lucy. Specifically, Paul pledges to marry her upon his return and gives her a school. As the novel concludes, Lucy spends three years waiting for Paul's return.

As time finally approaches, his arrival is marked by the same siren imagery discussed at the very beginning of Lucy's journey. As he is expected to be traveling, Lucy notices the storm forming overhead and compares it to the feeling of a shipwreck during her childhood: "The skies hang full and dark…I have noted them ever since childhood. God watch that sail! Oh! guard it!" (545). Already, Paul's fate appears to be sealed by the reference to her childhood. Then, Lucy notes the fierceness of the storm taking command of the sea and causing shipwrecks: "That storm roared frenziedly, for seven days. It did not cease till the Atlantic was strewn with wrecks…" (546). Here, Brontë most clearly enacts the classical story of the siren. In her further attempts to cry out, accentuated by her exclamatory statements, and prevent the storm, the sea only rages on more vehemently.

Ultimately, the storm leads many ships to their doom, with wreckages claiming ship and crew alike. Not only does this circle back to Lucy's opening connection to water symbolism, and she alludes to her family's demise, but it also ties her most directly to the image of the siren casting out her call and leading ships to the wreckage. Finally, Lucy's final call to the reader to imagine a happy ending cements Bronte's subversion of phallocentric writing: "Let them picture union and a happy succeeding life" (Brontë 546). In this way, Brontë acknowledges that her novel is expected to end in a certain way, and just like Lucy implored the reader to imagine a perfect childhood, women are expected to live a particular lifestyle. Thus, her decision to withhold information and disrupt the narrative with breaks such as this highlight her early push to break the structure of phallocentric writing. Rather than focusing on clear progressions and gratification, Brontë leaves the reader questioning and uncertain, exemplifying women's identity.

Ultimately, the novel ends in a fashion similar to how it begins, building on Brontë's version of écriture féminine. Emphasizing a sense of circularity rather than linearity, Brontë places Lucy exactly where she started. Just as she was as a child embracing the waves and being a bystander to "shipwrecks," so too at the end of the novel does Lucy stand upon the shore, safe from harm, but onlooker to waves and shipwrecks. In this way, Brontë ends the novel with Lucy just as powerfully situated as a siren as she does at the

start. The use of the siren-nun binary acts as a way for Brontë to explore a reclaiming of a woman's voice and sexual identity in a way that precedes Cixous' écriture féminine. Yet, unlike Cixous' emphasis on the body and clear sexual presence, Brontë uses the symbols of the siren and nun to navigate the topic of sexuality without being explicit. Overall, Brontë implements many instances of phallocentric disruption and a push against male-centered writing by privileging the voice of her heroine over all else, even being willing to define that voice within the siren-nun binary. Perhaps Lucy's tale is not one ending in complete sorrow, however. Instead, it may be Brontë's warning that when finally reclaimed, a woman's voice has the power to control the sea and bring about the ruin of patriarchal society, highlighted by Paul's colonial visit to the West Indies ending in death.

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K-POP AND ROMANTICISM: AMERICAN, BRITISH, AND SOUTH KOREAN WORLDVIEWS

"How much should my longings fall like snow, before the days of spring return, friend?" This line in South Korean musical group BTS's (Beyond the Scene) song, "Spring Day" (2017), blurs the boundary between human emotion—longing—and the changing of the season—a spring day. This blurred boundary demonstrates the Buddhist religion and philosophies of reincarnation and *samsara*. Both concepts emphasize the oneness of every being. Employing these Eastern philosophies, BTS shows the interconnectedness between human emotion and nature. These Buddhist concepts of reincarnation and *samsara* can also be found in the South Korean Romantic poet Jeong-ju Seo's "Beside a Chrysanthemum" (1947). This paper will compare this poem to American Romantic poet William Cullen Bryant's "The Yellow Violet" (1821) that shares a similar main object—a yellow flower—with the South Korean poem. This comparison will signify how two Romantic poets—American and South Korean—view nature and human beings through different lenses—individuality and collectivity. To demonstrate how such different views continue in more contemporary Romantic works, this paper will explore Ursula K. Le Guinn's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" (1973) alongside BTS's "Spring Day" (2017). This article will help us to see how a variety of different approaches to nature—within Romanticism—timelessly continue when it is considered globally.

While both Seo and Bryant depict a similar object—a yellow flower—through their poems, they demonstrate different philosophies in analyzing the growth of a yellow flower. As a South Korean writer, Seo blurs the boundary between humans and nature, as in BTS's "Spring Day." For example, he depicts how his own sleeplessness was the very resource needed for the flower to bloom. On the other hand, as an American writer, Bryant expresses the beauty of the yellow flower when it is separated and isolated. He praises the beauty of the flower for its isolated status, without interaction with any objects including humans or other nature. This comparison between Seo's and Bryant's depictions on the

yellow flower demonstrates the various approaches about the relationship between nature and humankind according to one's religious, philosophical, and cultural backgrounds.

The colonial period of Korea (1919-1945) was the time when the immense flow of Western ideology came in through imperialism. To reverse this flow, as a Romantic South Korean poet, Jeong-ju Seo wrote "Beside a Chrysanthemum" (1947) as a way to advocate for decolonization from Western imperialism after the independence of Korea from Japan. Because of such endeavors, "Beside a Chrysanthemum" provides rich resources to study Eastern Romanticism independent from Western concepts or ideas. While Korean literature begins to admire the Western powers, Jeong-ju Seo uses the most prevalent flower in Korea—a yellow chrysanthemum—to depict the scenery of fall and reinforce his Eastern Buddhist philosophies against Western influence after decolonization.

Seo, for example, uses the Buddhist philosophy—reincarnation—in his Romantic poems. Reincarnation, also known as rebirth or transmigration, is the philosophical or religious concept that the non-physical essence of a living being begins a new life in a different physical form or body after biological death. In "A Study on the Ecological Energy Circulation and the Eternal Cycle of Reincarnation in Seo Jeong-ju's Literature," Jae Woong Yun indicates how Seo's "various thought systems about reincarnation appear in the whole range of his literature" (189). Through using reincarnation, Seo collapses the boundaries among physical things and highlights the interconnectedness of every being regardless of their physical forms. Through this, Seo demonstrates how nature and humankind cannot be divided according to their physical forms but exist as one being that shares the essence of life together. Buddhist belief—reincarnation—depicts how a human can be born as a different creature on the earth after one's death, which shows a crucial Eastern approach to viewing nature. Reincarnation speaks to the interconnected nature of life itself; all life is transitory and interconnected, moving from one vessel to another between life and death. This belief system provides a collective and harmonious viewpoint in interpreting the relationships between nature and human beings, by emphasizing "oneness," regardless of their physical forms.

Furthermore, reincarnation can be applied to the interpretation of the time. This Buddhist belief does not divide the time by past, present, and future. Yun also articulates how Seo Jeong-ju deduces the space in and out of the solar system and recognizes time that transcends through the aspects of past, present, and future life (190). These blurred divisions in the time and seasons are a crucial element for Buddhist philosophy that can be found in both Seo's "Beside the Chrysanthemum" and BTS's "Spring Day." This philosophy helps us to understand how Nam-joon (RM), the leader of the BTS group, came up with the idea to write "Spring Day." He wrote about the falling of cherry blossoms and snowflakes while he was watching a falling leaf in the fall at a park. Nam-joon's idea demonstrates how the falling leaf in the fall goes across the times and let him think about the occurrences and characteristics of other seasons—spring and winter—at the same time as the fall. This show how "Spring Day" is interwoven with the Buddhist philosophy of reincarnation that emphasizes the interconnectedness of every being just as can be found in Seo's poem.

Nam-joon posted about this on Twitter, noting how he was inspired to create the lyrics of "Spring Day":

> I don't know the correct translation of the lyrics. But it's 'Snow or flowers are falling…' right? It was originally leaves. I just watched the leaves on the ground fell from the tree. It was in December or November. The day was strange. It just caught my mind. So I picked this leaf and it was destiny. The wind was blowing, and the leaf was falling so I thought… Oh, the leaves are falling… It was like that. (2019)

Nam-joon's quote is helpful to understand how the reincarnation belief—the oneness of season—applies to "Spring Day." Even though his inspiration for the song came from a falling leaf in a park, he writes about falling flowers in spring and even moves to write about the falling snowflakes in winter. Korean writers—not only Seo but also Nam-joon—collapse the divisions between time and season. Even though Nam-joon wrote the song in fall as watching a falling leaf, he depicts falling snowflakes and falling flowers related to that falling leaf. His interview demonstrates not only the influence of Romanticism in the lyrics of the song, but also the concept of reincarnation through the blurred divisions between times and seasons.

Contrary to South Korean Romanticism that emphasizes the "deeply interfused" traits of every being and times, individualism and divisions among every being appear in William Cullen Bryant's "The Yellow Violet." Just as Eastern philosophy—specifically reincarnation—applies both "Beside a Chrysanthemum" and "Spring Day," the Western lenses of individualism apply to the worldview in "The Yellow Violet" and "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas."

Bryant, as an American nationalist, maximizes American Western elements—independence of beings—that serve as a movement for the independence of America from the British colony. Interestingly, Bryant's historical and political background is very similar to Seo's. Seo is considered a nationalist who wrote his poem to protect South Korea's own culture and philosophy from imperialism and Western influence. Similar to how Seo chose a chrysanthemum, the most common flower in South Korea, to depict the pure beauty of Korea as a movement for decolonization, Bryant chooses a yellow violet to portray the beauty of America itself from the British colonization. Interestingly, such efforts of Seo and Bryant to contain the most South Korean and American in their works gives a vivid contrast in interpreting nature and season according to their own Eastern and Western philosophies of collectivism and individualism.

In "A Poet of the Land: William Cullen Bryant and Moundbuilder Ecology," John Hay discusses Bryant's participation in a nationalist literary project as an effort to found a home-grown American literature distinct from its British counterpart. Regarding this kind of movement that he attributes to American literary independence, Hay writes the following:

> Bryant promoted native natural vistas, singing of yellow violets and waterfowls rather than of primroses and nightingales. He accomplished on the page what his

> friend Thomas Cole did on the canvas; upon his death in 1878, his New York Times obituary mourned the passing of "our great landscapist in verse." (476)

Bryant is called the "author of America," a reputation built on his celebration not only of the nation, but also of the land and nature itself. Based on this historical background, readers can understand how Bryant's "The Yellow Violet" is deeply interwoven with American philosophy and religion—individualism and independence.

To build upon this kind of American philosophical background of "The Yellow Violet," Calvinism, neoclassicism, and Wordsworthian Romanticism also influenced Bryant. In "William Cullen Bryant: 'Father of American Song,'" Alan Donovan reveals how Bryant's poems—including "The Yellow Violet"—speak of "the natural world as adorning or illustrating to emphasize the effect of moral sentiment, not of natural phenomena as precise illustrations of divine truth. Still, the idea of correspondence immediately focuses attention upon the individual epistemological process of relating natural to supernatural" (570). Through this emphasis on "moral sentiment," Bryant emphasizes an "individual epistemological process of relating natural to supernatural." Calvinism influenced Bryant's individualistic concepts in his poems as well. According to Calvinism, an individual confession matters more than having a mediator between God, which is different from the Catholic idea that people need a mediator, such as a priest. This religious view of Calvinism magnifies the individualism in the poem as well, which requires one's confession of their sins to God, instead of having a mediator between a confessor and God. This Calvinistic influence that Bryant was exposed to can be compared to how Seo's "Beside a Chrysanthemum" uses imagery from the idea of reincarnation that emphasizes oneness and collectivism. This difference between two writers shows how religious philosophies—Buddhism and Calvinism—influenced writers to have different lenses of interpreting nature and humankind.

A flower is used as the main object in both "The Yellow Violet" and "Beside the Chrysanthemum." In "The Yellow Violet," Bryant uses "the yellow violet's modest bell" to symbolize how spring comes (3). In a similar way, Seo uses the yellow "chrysanthemum" as a sign announcing the arrival of fall (1, 4). Additionally, both flowers are yellow. This shows that yellow symbolizes the same idea in Western and Eastern cultures—an image of warmth and hope—from a reading of two poems across philosophies and religions. Although Bryant and Seo are from different countries and different time periods, they use a yellow flower as the theme of their poems to announce the change of season. In "Meaning of Chrysanthemum in Sino-Korean Poetry in Korea," Dong-Jae Lee articulates how a chrysanthemum symbolizes loyalty by showing its noble look in the wild wind and frost—which follows Confucius's philosophy that was popular among royal families in Korea—and friendship viewed like a cup, which is a medium of drinking that emphasizes collectivity among human beings. Likewise, Bryant uses a friendly yellow violet to announce the spring, which shows his affection towards the natural beauty of America.

Even though both poems use the same object to depict a new season, they reveal different perspectives of nature reflective of differences in philosophical ideas. While

Bryant uses the lens of individuality for observing each being in nature, Seo sees them through the lens of collectivity, emphasizing the correlations among them. In "The Yellow Violet," Bryant describes the variety of relationships in nature in the first stanza:

> When beechen buds begin to swell,
> And woods the blue-bird's warble know,
> The yellow violet's modest bell
> Peeps from the last year's leaves below. (1-4)

Readers are able to perceive a sense of individuality in the relationships within nature. Each element of nature such as "Beechen buds," "woods," "the blue-bird," and "the yellow violet's modest bell" create harmony *in* their own way rather than build a correlation *between* each other. For instance, how "the beechen buds begin to swell" does not influence the "woods the blue-bird's warble know." In this way, how "the yellow violet's modest bell / peeps from the last year's leaves below" is not an action caused by any of these activities, but exists instead in its own individual way, each doing a different job.

In a distinct contrast to Bryant's depiction, Seo sees nature in a more collective way. In "Beside a Chrysanthemum," Seo depicts how nature has correlations within itself. In the first stanza, Seo describes the blooming of chrysanthemums in this way: "To bring one chrysanthemum / To flower, the cuckoo has cried / since spring (1-3)."

Seo depicts the correlations between all of nature. Just as Bryant describes the scenery of spring in his poem, Seo incorporates both a flower and a bird in the first stanza. Their purpose and function in relation to each other, however, are composed in clearly different ways. Seo, employing the Buddhist philosophical idea of *samsara* (the eternal cycle of birth, death, and rebirth), reveals the relationship within all of nature. In the Buddhist perspective of seeing how nature is related to each other, Seo mentions how "the cuckoo has cried" "to bring one chrysanthemum to flower." But, for the cuckoo, there would be no chrysanthemum. Interestingly, the first stanza of William Blake's "The Echoing Green" helps to understand how Seo—a South Korean writer—depicts such correlations between all of nature:

> The sun does arise,
> And make happy the skies.
> The merry bells ring
> To welcome the Spring.
> The sky-lark and thrush,
> The birds of the bush,
> Sing louder around,
> To the bells' cheerful sound. (1-8)

Blake mentions how "the sun" becomes the source to "make happy the skies" (1-2). This perception of succession in nature continues by depicting how "The merry bell rings / To welcome the Spring" (3-4). This sound of "the bells" makes "the sky-lark, "thrush," and "the birds of the bush" to "sing louder around" (5-8). This kinship of correlation between nature and, further, humankind, is prevalent throughout "Beside a Chrysanthemum" according to

the Buddhist worldview that incorporates a view that everything and everyone are interconnected in their life essence.

Furthermore, in "Beside a Chrysanthemum," Seo blurs the distinctions between the seasons as well as nature is creatures. When readers regard the chrysanthemum as the flower that blooms in fall, they realize that the poem is describing the scenery of fall. On the other hand, Seo depicts how "the cuckoo has cried / since spring." This shows how what happens in spring can influence fall, blurring the seasonal borders, and creating a correlation between seasons: the whole of nature. It is a distinct contrast to Bryant's way of viewing seasons. By mentioning the specific months of April and May, Seo focuses on spring instead of mentioning the other seasons in which the yellow violet does not exist:

> Oft, in the sunless April day,
> Thy early smile has stayed my walk;
> But midst the gorgeous blooms of May,
> I passed thee on thy humble stalk. (21-24)

These lines signify the distinct contrast of perspectives between the two writers' views of the seasons. Seo, the South Korean writer, sees the whole spectrum of connections. Bryant, the American writer, sees an individual timeline and explores the seasons one by one.

Despite those contrasts, "The Yellow Violet" and "Beside a Chrysanthemum" share similarities. For example, Bryant and Seo both use female images when describing flowers. Bryant thinks of "the virgin" while Seo thinks of "my sister." In "The Yellow Violet," this image is shown in the second stanza:

> Ere russet fields their green,
> Sweet flower, I love, in forest bare,
> To meet thee, when thy faint perfume
> Alone is in the virgin air. (5-8)

To depict the beauty of the yellow violet, Bryant skillfully portrays not only the visual image of the flower, using the colors "russet," "green," and "yellow," but also depicts the scent of its "faint perfume." Here, in his perspective, which values individuality, he also depicts how isolated the yellow violet is from the touch of others and keeps it "alone" in the virgin air through the use of the female image.

Similarly, Seo is reminded of the female image by seeing the chrysanthemum as his sister. This is depicted in the third stanza:

> Flower, like my sister returning
> from distant, youthful byways
> of throat-tight longing
> to stand by the mirror: (7-10)

In "Beside a Chrysanthemum," however, in contrast to Bryant who cherishes the isolation of the yellow violet, Seo relates the chrysanthemum to himself by being reminded of his sister when seeing it. He connects it to himself when he says that the flower reminds him of "my

sister returning / from distant," which lessens the distance between the flower and himself. This idea symbolizes how all of nature and human beings are connected to each other like a circle instead of being separated and existing as individual elements. In addition to this, a virgin image from Bryant seems like a symbolic meaning tied to concepts of conquest, discovery, domination, or, at least, innocence, whereas Seo's sister image from the flower brings up a familial idea of a relationship.

This similarity and contrast are also revealed when comparing the third stanza of "The Yellow Violet" with the second stanza of "Beside a Chrysanthemum." Both authors use images that contrast the warmth and hopefulness of flowers: "cold," "thunder," plus "black clouds" in their "blossoming" and "blooming." Bryant reveals this landscape in the third stanza:

> Of all her train, the hands of Spring
> First plant thee in the watery mould,
> And I have seen thee blossoming
> Beside the snow-bank's edges cold. (9-12)

In depicting how the yellow violet is "blossoming / beside the snow-bank's edges cold" even in spring, he describes the hardship that the flower endures. This image gives a vivid contrast between "thee (the yellow violet)" and "the snow-bank's edges cold." Bryant maximizes the warmth and hopefulness of the flower. This contrast between the flower and its opposite image is also displayed in Seo's poem. He mentions it in the second stanza of "Beside a Chrysanthemum: "To bring one chrysanthemum to bloom, / thunder has rolled / through the black clouds (4-6)." Here, Bryant shows clear contrast to the image of "chrysanthemum", "thunder" and "black clouds." Even though it is similar in some ways to Bryant's poem because it shows a contrasting image to the warmth of the flower, Seo, with his South Korean or Buddhist perspective, shows how all those contrasting images also function as "the nutrients" for the flowers to grow. This view also demonstrates the Confucian philosophy of *yin and yang*—the two complementary forces that make up all aspects and phenomena of life. Seo uses *yin and yang* to emphasize how the flower, which symbolizes yang, needs the part of "black clouds," which symbolizes yin, to bloom. This reflects the Confucian perspective that sees the value of nature's balance between darkness and light so as to become a completed being. In this way, "thunder" and "the black clouds" do not exist as detached beings, but instead function as beings that together give birth to the "chrysanthemum." It implies the correlation of everything in nature. This perspective reveals distinct contrast with Bryant who sees "thee" and "the snow-bank's edges cold" as separate isolated beings: opposing images that maximize their own characteristics rather than allowing them the correlations necessary for the yellow violet to bloom.

Near the end of their poems, both authors mention the relationship between the narrators and the flowers. In "The Yellow Violet," Bryant depicts how the narrator regrets how he "passed" the yellow violet while "its smile has stayed my walk" (21-24). The yellow violet is the being that teaches the narrator the lesson by reflecting on how he "copied" his friends and "ape[s] the ways of pride" as depicted in the seventh stanza:

So they, who climb to wealth, forget
The friends in darker fortunes tried.
I copied them—but I regret
That I should ape the ways of pride. (26-30)

Through this stanza, the narrator recalls the "dark" time in his life. By letting the narrator express "I regret" in such a direct way, however, Bryant, as a Romantic poet, reveals how the yellow violet, nature, can teach a valuable lesson to a human being by showing how the yellow violet humbles herself, instead of flaunting the beauty depicted in the fourth stanza:

Thy parent sun, who bade thee view
Pale skies, and chilling moisture sip,
Has bathed thee in his own bright hue,
And streaked with jet thy glowing lip. (13-16)

The narrator sees the beauty of the yellow violet absorbing the full sunlight of spring. He describes how it has a "glowing lip" by the action of the sun. And yet, as it follows in the fifth stanza, the yellow violet keeps humbleness despite its beauty and brilliant glory:

Yet slight thy form, and low they seat,
And earthward bent thy gentle eye,
Unapt the passing view to meet
When loftier flowers are flaunting nigh. (16-20)

As a Romantic poet, Bryant clearly shows the value of nature in the lessons it gives us by being the true example to the human being. Through seeing how the yellow violet keeps her "low they seat" and "bent thy gentle eye," despite her glowing beauty, the narrator learns his lesson through the flower and regrets what he has done.

Similarly, Seo mentions the relationship between the flower and the narrator. Seo uses "I" as the subject for the verb of the last line of the last stanza, revealing what the narrator realizes in seeing the chrysanthemum: "for your yellow petals to open,/ last night such a frost fell,/ and I did not sleep (11-13)." Seo concludes the poem by saying: "I did not sleep." He does this to show how even his own sleeplessness was the very resource needed for the flower to bloom. This means that his sleepless night was not meaningless. Seo emphasizes that the hardships that men go through can turn out to be a flower in the end. In the perspective of a correlation between all of nature, he even relates the efforts and hardship of the narrator to the point that "I did not sleep" so that "yellow petals" may open. In a gender-conscious reading, here the (male) narrator sacrifices himself for the flower (female), looking at the flower as a collective being to him, whereas Bryant is given a corrective to his formerly prideful behavior considering himself as a separated being to the flower (female). Bryant perceives the yellow violet as a virgin—a being to conquer—while Seo reminds himself of his sister—a being that is related to him—when looking at the chrysanthemum. While Bryant depicts the flower as a being separate from the narrator, Seo blurs the boundary between the chrysanthemum and the narrator. He explains the correlations within nature, even including the narrator himself, by showing how "yellow petals," "a frost," and "I" influence each other. As is shown in the last line, even hardships and negative aspects—*yin*—can be the aspects necessary for the flower to bloom—*yang*.

Just as Seo's "Beside a Chrysanthemum" parallels the South Korean contemporary work, BTS's "Spring Day," with South Korean Buddhist concepts, Bryant's individualistic worldview to Romanticism in "The Yellow Violet" also resonates with American contemporary literature—Ursula Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." Interestingly, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" is referenced in the "Spring Day" music video.

Both contemporary works—"Spring Day" and "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas"—are strongly immersed with Romantic elements, discussing contemporary social, political, and educational issues. In "Ursula's Bookshelf," Kris Swank lists the authors and works that influenced or inspired Le Guin's writings, highlighting how Romanticism is deeply rooted in "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." Le Guin states: "The progress of my style has been away from open Romanticism [but] I am still a Romantic, no doubt about that, and glad of it" (139). This interview shows how Le Guin can be considered a contemporary Romantic writer to be compared to Bryant in the Romantic period. Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" helps us understand how individual and independent emphasis on nature and surroundings still continues in American literature. Le Guin's story is comparable to BTS's "Spring Day," a South Korean contemporary Romantic work that emphasizes the harmony between nature and human phenomena. These two works demonstrate how the different worldviews—America and South Korea—that started from Seo and Bryant still continue in contemporary works.

For instance, the album title of "Spring Day" is *You Never Walk Alone,* while Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" closes with this passage: "Each one goes alone, youth, or girl, man or woman." Through their song, BTS emphasizes the synergic effect that the collectivity of human beings has, while Le Guin respects the individual decision of human beings. In "Forgetting Dostoevsky; or, The Political Unconscious of Ursula K. Le Guin," Heinz Tschachler highlights how Le Guin's writing is about "the assertion of individual freedom, the exercise of personal will as the only countervailing force to impersonal rationalization and the mechanization of life" (64). This counters BTS's approaches to solving social issues through collective and harmonious efforts.

In "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," Le Guin depicts a single unfortunate child who has to suffer for the utopia of the whole community. Similarly, BTS's "Spring Day" is also related to Sinking of Sewol Ferry (2014), which led to the killing of almost three hundred high school students (Danwon High School). Regarding this tragedy that affected young South Korean lives, BTS emphasizes the collectivity of human interactions through Romanticism by titling their song's album as "you never walk alone." On the other hand, Le Guin emphasizes an individual and personal effort to solve the city of Omela's ignoring a child's life when she concludes her story by telling how people walk away from Omelas one by one. These contemporary Romantic works from South Korea and America demonstrate the continued cultural and philosophical differences in interpreting human interactions and nature throughout the twenty-first century. This comparison will help to see the different worldviews—America and South Korea—in both classical Romantic poems and contemporary Romantic works.

As Romantic poets, Bryant and Seo both use a yellow flower and depict it in their poems. Their perspectives, however, are presented differently according to their cultural and philosophical ideas. In "Thanatopsis," Bryant himself emphasizes how we can learn from nature "from all around" by saying that: "to Nature's teachings, while from all around – / Earth and her waters, and the depths of air, – / Comes a still voice." Bryant and Seo depict "a still voice" of a yellow flower from their different cultural perspectives: Bryant reveals the beauty of the yellow violet in its individual state, while Seo explores the correlations among nature and human beings, observing the beauty of the chrysanthemum (the yellow flower). Bryant epitomizes one aspect or tendency of Romanticism that, for all its beauty and attention to the beauty of nature, still relies on division and individuality, while Seo suggests something more "deeply interfused," and so we see a variety of different approaches to nature—within Romanticism—when it is considered globally.

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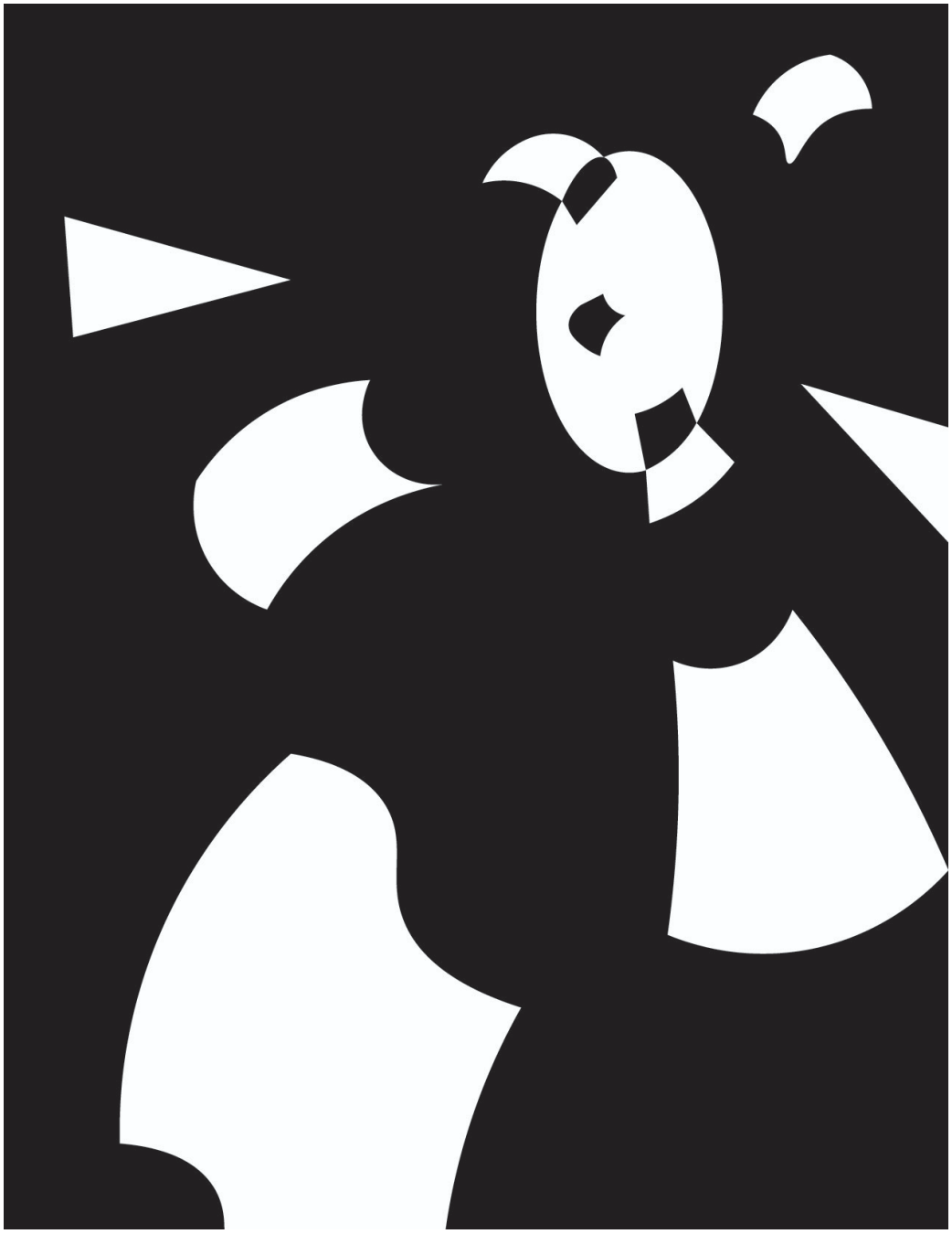
off-Centered utilizes contrasting elements of shape and color to show how opposing forces can come together and harmonize to create new ideas. *convergence of dreams* illustrates the future of humanities as advancing technology changes the way we view the world around us. As the forms move farther and farther away from the viewer, their color changes but their shapes stay the same.

Off-centered



convergence of dreams

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REVISITING HUMAN TEMPORALITY: THINKING THROUGH MARTIN HEIDEGGER AND HITOSHI IMAMURA

INTRODUCTION

No one would gainsay that one of the major features by which the post-WWII era can be distinguished from previous ones is a widespread de-anthropocentric inclination, and during the last couple of decades the tendency has become so influential that now there are very few social spheres in which human-centrism can go unquestioned as in olden days. Broadly speaking, this trend should be welcomed. If the twentieth century had been devoid of those foresighted figures that fostered it (e.g. Rachel Carson and Aldo Leopold) and mankind had kept exploiting and ruining nature without consideration for non-human beings, the present condition of the earth would be more disturbing. Yet, we ought to be mindful that, in the astute words of Orde-Ward, "everything is bifacial—just as no plate has one side, and no stick one end alone" (19). The decentralization of humanity, which has been variously dubbed "nonhuman turn," "post-humanism" or "anti-anthropocentrism," is no exception, having brought about some unexpected effects on certain domains of human society.

Among the affected are the academic humanities. In a recently published book, Igor Klyukanov, Eastern Washington University's professor of communication, observes that "the task of the humanities is to understand what makes humankind" (65). Whilst the statement should have sounded too obvious to verbalize in the past, anyone who has witnessed the actual way the humanistic studies have been carried out for these years will agree that many humanities scholars would deem it as an oldfangled and obsolete guideline. There are even some who have gone too far to the extent that they present immoderately misanthropic arguments in disguise as intellectual opinions, and, alarmingly, a few of them (e.g. David Benatar and John Gray) have gained not a small number of devotees.

These circumstances are not sound. However true it is that the subjects of inquiry in the traditional humanities have been anthropocentric, it is also true that, as De la Peña pronounces, their "core mission" should remain "an understanding of the human condition and to engage in the context in which we live and to make something better" (29). Against this backdrop, this paper reexamines our being human by surveying one of our distinctly unique attributes: temporality. I present a threefold critique thereof. Firstly, I encapsulate the most momentous discussion handling the subject, i.e., that of Martin Heidegger, and confirm its gist to be largely valid but defective in that he puts too much focus on the future. Secondly, I provide a compendium on Hitoshi Imamura's relatively unnoticed but fairly ingenious conception of historical time and on its insight into one's temporality, clarifying that, one should deem one's current existence to be an amalgam of contingently realized potentialities and "possible pasts." Lastly, I conclude by experimentally contending, first, that, drawing jointly on Heidegger's and Imamura's discussions, we can procure the liberal competence to persevere between the actual and the possible, and, second, that we, before rashly arraigning anthropocentrism, had better accept our ignorance even of our being human.

MARTIN HEIDEGGER'S DISCUSSION ON HUMAN TEMPORALITY

We can reckon it as belonging to common knowledge that Martin Heidegger is, to borrow an expression of Pattison, a "philosopher of time par excellence" (143), and, those who have read a book on the historical unfoldment of Western philosophy may know that one trait that differentiates Heidegger from other theorists of time is his scrupulous regard for the relationship between time and human existence. Put differently, his deliberation about time is unique in that it treats human beings and time together rather than separately; that is why he is exclusively examined here as compared to other theorists that cleave time and humanity apart.

Those who are well conversant with the opuses of Heidegger, despite his being "notorious for his idiosyncratic formulations and almost occult use of language" (O'Keefe and Reno 46), can adduce the philosopher's remarks pertaining to the abovementioned point. Still, they would admit that an argument which directly appertains to it and thus is most relevant to this essay is found in Division Two of *Being and Time*, which is entitled "Da-sein and Temporality". The following text presented as an encapsulation of Heidegger's discourse on human temporality rests principally thereon.

First of all, I cite a sentence which concisely manifests the alpha and omega of Heidegger's acumen in that respect: "The existential and ontological constitution of the totality of Da-sein is grounded in temporality" (398). Let me quote another in which the same drift is articulated: "temporality makes the being of Da-sein possible" (Heidegger 340). The rough sense of Da-sein in its authentic mode is, as opposed to one that has lost human attributes like the ability to think critically, "one who reflects upon one's existence" (Gelven 48). Thence, rephrased in terms accessible to the public, the comments essentially

assert that temporality constitutes the primal condition for the existence of a self-cognizant and autonomous human being.

Needless to say, the foregoing version is meaningless without being accompanied with an elucidation of what temporality exactly denotes. Then, what is it? A positive definition formulated by Heidegger goes as follows: "*Temporality is the primordial 'outside of itself' in and for itself*" (302). Whereas this observation laden with the terminology of phenomenology laconically conveys the pith of Heideggers' temporality, it would, except for Heideggerians and academics, sound scarcely comprehensible. Besides, other statements in which Heidegger spells out the concept will come across as equally intricate.

Notwithstanding, as befits one of the greatest philosophers in history, he has had brilliant interpreters of his words. Here I turn to an admirable exposition of Benner and Wrubel: "temporality does not refer to mere passage of time or to a series of events arranged historically. Temporality means being anchored in a present made meaningful by past experience and one's anticipated future" (112). To paraphrase, temporality signifies our being situated not on the plane of the present alone but, rather, within multiple dimensions of time composed not only of what is at hand but also of what is coming and what has faded.

What must not be left unmentioned is that Heidegger never judges all the aspects of time to be equivalently momentous for temporality, saying that "the future has priority in the ecstatic unity of primordial authentic temporality" and that the "*primary phenomenon of primordial and authentic temporality is the future*" (302-3). Although Heidegger's argumentation substantiating why the future is of prime importance is reconditely nuanced, its marrow is that time's multifaceted nature reveals itself sufficiently only when it is pondered over from the perspective of the future because it is not until the prerequisite is met that the remaining two aspects—the present and the past—become thinkable. To tersely express this by parodying a famed phrase of Georges Canguilhem, the future is, while logically second, existentially first.

To sum up: According to Heidegger, one's becoming a human fully suitable for the name is made possible by picking up on and living after the fact that one's existence consists in being multiply folded in the triplex fabric of time in which the future holds paramountcy over the past and the present as the primary temporal mode which makes the other two cogitable.

Regardless of the span of time that has elapsed since Heidegger originally propounded his theory of time and the condition of being human, it would still retain validity. We may be able to ascertain that by deliberating about the possible similarity between what we might put down as unadult and "contemporary people" who "are spending their lives while absolutizing only the 'present'" (Hasegawa 38). At least, it may be worthwhile for us to ask ourselves whether people of today, hemmed in a vicious cycle of frantically checking, mostly on social networking sites, what is in vogue, what is valued among the masses, and what is correct *right now* and then witnessing them turning

obsolete, are really decent adults and have a due regard for their living within a rich duration of time.

Fairly insightful as Heidegger's thesis that a requirement which one must pass to become a proper person is bringing one's own temporality home to oneself, it is not the case that he has no blind spots. Construing Derrida's essay on Heidegger, Bascuñán pithily pinpoints the gravest of them: "Heidegger illegitimately privileges the future" (par. 82). In other words, Heidegger's speculation, being deficient in attention to the past, should be supplemented by the one which extracts much wisdom by ruminating about the past. In the next section, I will examine an aspect of Hitoshi Imamura's thought as that which exactly does it.

HITOSHI IMAMURA'S DISCUSSION OF HISTORICAL TIME

The Japanese social philosopher Hitoshi Imamura produced multitudinous achievements which Japanese as well as Chinese and Korean scholars still consult every so often. Meanwhile, for all his first-class works, he has been obscure except in the Far East. This is a fault of Western scholarship that privileges the Eurocentric and therefore creates a dearth of knowledge. Hence, it would be advisable for me to commence this section by supplying a thumbnail sketch of his academic career.

Albeit having written a couple of papers in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, Imamura first signalized himself in 1975 by publishing a comprehensive monograph on the eminent French Marxist Louis Althusser, and, during the course of the 1980s and the 1990s, his renown both as a meticulous academic studying Marxism, Althusser's theory, and modern philosophy at large and as a profound thinker penetratingly canvassing such big and knotty issues as modernity, violence, and labor grew widespread to the extent that, when significant events took place, prestigious media asked him to comment thereon. Then, in the 2000s until his death in 2007, Imamura produced legions of supreme works which only the genuinely mature philosophers can write. They contain authentically original insights into sundry matters. Among them are Buddhism, ritual, sociality, and, above all, historical time.

Whereas Imamura repeatedly deals with historical time in his opuses, one can find the text in which he expounds on it most coherently in the second section of the third part of *A Close Reading of Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History,"* a book written in 2000 which, contra the title, is not merely a commentary on the German philosopher's famous piece. Rather, what Imamura does in it is exploit an array of Benjamin's abstruse and recondite passages as a springboard and offer his own ideas as to various topics including historical time.

With preliminaries having been settled, now it behooves me to set about explicating what Imamura opines about historical time and how we can broaden our apprehension of human temporality with the aid thereof. Imamura anatomizes the Heideggerian notion of time (172-5), contains little that exhibits novelty, though his recapitulation is of

professional quality. For my discussion, it will suffice to point out that Imamura rightly condenses Heidegger's foremost thesis into the proposition that "time comes from the future" and acknowledges that it is "perhaps the most important theory of time" or, at least, "an undeniably important thought on time" (174-5).

Thereupon, Imamura, ostensibly interpreting Benjamin's *Thesis*, starts to illustrate his original thinking concerning time that takes into account another "dynamics of time which cannot be exhausted by theory of time that prioritizes the future" or a "dynamics of time prioritizing the past" (176). Whilst some will deem it too obvious to be underscored, let me stress that these remarks reveal Imamura's intention to propose not a replacement for but a complement to Heidegger's theory of time.

On the one hand, Imamura attempts to elucidate his view, on which he bestows the plain appellation of a "theory of time prioritizing possible pasts" (178), in a variety of ways, but, on the other hand, that, as is often the case with one who aspires to put forth an unprecedented idea, he mostly fails to put it into adequately intelligible words. He awkwardly observes, for instance, that his theory is "headed for . . . not the past as merely given but the pasts in possible modalities" and that it assumes "whatever humans do and execute" to be "only producing ruins" (176-7).

Yet, at the end of the section is one paragraph in which he, albeit not completely free of clumsiness, succeeds in delineating his thought in terms which are interpretable, if not effortlessly understandable as it stands. Lengthy as it is, it would be appropriate to quote it without an ellipsis:

> Incidentally, the so-called real is just one of what were possibilities. The past teems with a countless number of what were possibilities. If a future, a hopeful future were to exist, that precisely exists in the past. The time of history arrives from potentialities of those pasts which could have been, namely, from "futures in the past". Such historical time is not the objective time flow (from the past to the future). That is the time of self-knowledge, the time when a self becomes cognizant of its own historical existence, namely, the time in and for the conceptual comprehension of the self's being. This is Benjamin's thesis. (Imamura 180-1)

Let me directly come to the crux of what Imamura communicates. The quintessence can be parsed into two messages. One, which is an antecedent to the other, is that we had better arrive at an appreciation of the plurality and the contingency of the past(s) as well as the future(s). Described from another perspective, it encourages us to be alive to these two things. First, the past was, theoretically, able to follow countless routes different from the one which has been taken in the actual history, and, second, our imagination is capable of envisioning a myriad of futures which, not via the present in which we live, can ensue from those, in Imamura's phrase, "possible pasts". In short, he prompts us to solemnly reflect that what factually happened could have been otherwise and that a future which does not necessarily succeed to the current reality is conceivable.

The other message, which is more crucial for us as it represents a direct supplement to Heidegger's conclusion regarding human temporality, can naturally be deduced from the very appreciation. It is that once one realizes the multiple qualities of the past and the future, one will attain a finer comprehension of one's being. While here lies palpably a logical leap, one can easily fill it in. That is because it is plain that the realization inevitably equips one with manifold outlooks from which one can relativize oneself and the present context in which one is situated. In sum, the tenor of Imamura's view as to one's temporality is that, with the serious recognition of how possibly multiple the past and the future are and, in turn, of how fortuitous realized facts are, one can conceptualize one's existence in its temporal multidimensionality. It is a conspicuous truism, with Imamura, Heidegger

CONCLUSION

We have looked into Heidegger's and Imamura's discourses about one's temporality and, by conjoining them, we can reason, first, that one's maturing into an authentic individual is triggered by one's becoming sensible of one's temporality, i.e., of one's existence being structured through the triad of the past, present and future in which the last holds the ontological supremacy and, second, that, to come by a broader understanding of temporality, one should abstain from absolutizing what has been actualized and what will be realized from, to purposely employ a tautological phrase, the current present and, in lieu, imagine possible pasts and futures. Sensing this to the bone enables one to acquire the competence to persevere between the actual and the possible, viz the ability that capacitates one to be genuinely liberal and de-anthropocentric.

Considering our utter nescience of such seemingly uncomplicated matters as our temporal attribute, I should say that we may be necessary to rethink, with greater caution, how apt it is to shift the primary topic of inquiry in the humanities from the human to the nonhuman. To reword this with fewer words, we should be humble about our knowledge of what it is like to be human. This case can be bolstered by Hiroki Azuma's recent study which convincingly demonstrated that the concept of "family," in spite of its universality, has not been methodically scrutinized and that it is a dynamic category in that both exclusivity and openness compound it (52-72). In a word, before everything else, we must know our being human first.

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Wendy Cope's poem, "Lonely Hearts," has proven pliable enough to accommodate other forms and genres as the villanelle form, journalism and advertisement to reflect on social strife and damage. The poem plays out its own metatextual aspect as it reflects on itself as a hybrid genre and a vehicle of marginalized voices. The poet, then, is the voice of mediation opening the poem to pop culture and tabloid press and revisiting the old villanelle to carry across modern sufferings.

"PLEASE WRITE (WITH PHOTO) TO BOX 152.": THE MEDIATIZATION OF POETRY IN WENDY COPE'S "LONELY HEARTS"

The present paper addresses the notion of deviation in Wendy Cope's poem "Lonely Hearts," which is made up of a series of advertisements. Specifically, it argues that Cope uses and abuses the pre-established newspaper column "Lonely-hearts," relocating thereby the poetic tradition as well as the readership conventions in a mediatized frame of reference. The interconnection between poetry and media is reflective of the poet's subversive stance which aims to invigorate the poem with media techniques, in a contemporary changing world mediatized through and through. My use of the concept "mediatization" in the title of the present paper draws on a perspective through which the "interplay between media, culture and society" is observed.[17] "Mediatization," or "medialization,"[18] then, as I will argue in this paper, refers to the way newspaper techniques and conventions of writing have influenced fictionalization and, specifically, poetry writing. The crosspollination of poetry and media genres testifies for mediatized cultures and societies where human beings or social groups solace companionship and a sense of shared life via other mediating devices.[19] The poet, Wendy Cope, emerges as a mediating consciousness or figure of culture reflecting on the way people have become commercialized products in post-industrial societies.

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[17] Andreas Hepp, Stig Hjarvard, Knut Lundby (2015), "Mediatization: Theorizing the Interplay between Media, Culture and Society." *Media, Culture & Society*. 37 (3): 314–324.

[18] On this concept of "mediatization" or "medialization," see RégisDebray, *Media Manifestos: On the Technological Transmission of Cultural Forms* (1996), and *Transmitting Culture* (2000).
see for instance Nick Couldry and Andrea Hepp (2013), "Conceptualizing Mediatization: Contexts, Traditions, Arguments." *Communication Theory*. 23 (3): 314-324.

[19] See Stefanie Averbeck-Lietz (2014), "Understanding Mediatization in First Modernity: Sociological Classics and their Perspectives on Mediated and Mediatized Societies." In Lundby, Knut (ed.). *Mediatization of Communication*. De Gruyter. pp. 109–130.

What actually retains attention is the title of the poem "Lonely Hearts" which simultaneously ties the poem to the field of the press, and ramifies beyond that to refer to a whole category of people who are bereft of 'voice' and 'companionship. The adjective "lonely-hearts," according to the Oxford English Dictionary, refers to people who are seeking friendship, especially with a view to marriage, but also relates to the world of the press. In this regard, a "lonely-hearts column" is a section of a newspaper or magazine containing messages from such people. Wendy Cope, the poetess, plays on the newspaper space of expression (the lonely-hearts column in newspapers) and the social space of marginalization (the social space includes the cultural, economic and political dimensions) in the context of post-industrial and postmodern Britain.

It is interesting to note in this regard that the female speaker does not only display her unique voice but rather inscribes other voices within the same textual space of the poem. Bringing together a multitude of voices, the poet problematizes the act of representation. The poem thus grows into a theoretical platform which reflects upon such issues as identity, gender, society, culture, language and politics. The poem in this sense chronicles the frustration of those marginalized characters: "Male biker" (stanza one), "Gay vegetarian" (stanza two), "bisexual woman" (stanza three), "Jewish lady with a son" (stanza four). The speaker poet pleads on behalf of a certain category of people so much that "Lonely Hearts," now a new construct made out of the crossings between society and media, modulates into a generic reference which stands for those who are marginalized and deprived of partnership. The juxtaposition of subversion and tradition testifies to the metatextual dimension of the poem. Wendy Cope seems to lend major importance to the idea of how the contemporary poetic subject (re)locates itself to an already inhabited poetic landscape.

Wendy Cope's poem "Lonely Hearts" stands out as a macaronic construct which incorporates in its texture a "hypotextual"[20] media material of tabloid press, publicity, the villanelle[21] form, the carpe diem motif and mundane everyday speech. This sense of eclecticism invigorates the poem and offers it enough leeway to develop a broader swathe of significance. The parody of the "Lonely Hearts" newspaper column enables the poet to concentrate into one gloss the association of poetry and media, poetry and circulation, poetry and audience[22]. The rewriting of the newspaper column and its attendant inflection

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[20] See Simon Dentith, *Parody: New Critical Idiom Author*. He shows how Robert Phiddian, in his book *Swift's Parody* (1995), "wishes to use the metaphorical implications of the notion of 'writing under erasure' to suggest the multiple ways in which parody can invite the reader to examine, evaluate and re-situate the hypotextual material" (16).

[21] According to *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language* the villanelle is "a 19-line poem of fixed form consisting of five tercets and a final quatrain on two rhymes, with the first and third lines of the first tercet repeated alternately as a refrain closing the succeeding stanzas and joined as the final couplet of the quatrain."

[22] Wendy Cope lends much importance to public readership and dissemination of poetry. Stephen W Delchamps, for instance, in *Civil Humor: The Poetry of Gavin Ewart* claims that "The notion of civil poetry is also relevant to the so called Movement poets of the 1950s, for example Philip Larkin and Kingsley Amis, and a number of more recent poets such as Kit Wright, John Whitworth, and Wendy Cope. While popular notions of poetry and the poet are often colored by the contrasting "vatic" model of poetry, of which I will presently have

of the traditional forms and motifs with a contemporary idiom[23] brings to the fore a devious reading which reflects on poetry as a genre, that can play on the newspaper expanse of readership.

That Cope opts for parody and deviation from preset conventions is reflective of a dissident vision that is engaged in the cultural politics of British society. She inflects the poem in a more social perspective. She lavishes attention on the notion of a new poetry immersed in politics, popular culture, literary theory and history. What actually matters is not parody but this sense of deviation that shows through engrafting media techniques in the poetic text, while evoking and revoking the villanelle form and the carpe diem motif so much that the poem becomes an attitudinal platform to voice a new female vision that seeks to "set it right" and "to tell the truth" or "to tell it like it is" or to show how 'light verse can be "important" and "deeply felt[24]." As she puts it, "[i]n the mainstream poetry world [in the 1970s when Cope began writing] there wasn't much encouragement for women to do what I wanted to do – i.e., tell it like it is." This spells out Cope's assertion of her feminist poetic stance and commitment to "women's poetry,"[25] as against this "straight-faced male world" (Goodall 15). She claims in this regard, "[m]y parodies were a way of saying, 'OK. If that's how we're supposed to write, I'll do it'" (Goodall 15).

The parody of the newspaper column thrusts into relief the metafictional dimension of the poem "Lonely Hearts" and Cope's poetic stance in general. This subversive mode of poetry is all of a piece with the notion of "civil poetry" (Delchamps 11) and "performance

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more to say, the twentieth century has seen a reassertion of the civil approach" (11-12). On his part, Alison Baverstock, in *How to Market Books: The Essential Guide to Maximizing Profit and Exploiting All Channels to Market*, argues that "Most readers will home in on the beginning and perhaps the end of the text, as Wendy Cope brilliantly captured in a blurb that appeared on the back cover of a promotional piece to advertise *Making Cocoa for Kingsley Amis*: Brilliant, original, irreverent, lyrical, feminist, nostalgic, pastoral, anarchic, classical, plangent, candid, witty – these are all adjectives and some of them can truthfully be used to describe Wendy Cope's poems" (30).

[23] See Gerry Cambridge, "A Note on Wendy Cope." 14 April 2011 http://www.gerrycambridge.com/prosepdf/cope.pdf

[24] I am indebted to Anna Goodall's insightful remarks on Wendy Cope's poetic stance: "Wendy Cope made her name with her first anthology, *Making Cocoa for Kingsley Amis*, an achievement in itself, and established herself as a comic and astute writer with a marked ability to parody the male-dominated world of literature and poetic pursuits. She says, 'In the mainstream poetry world [in the 1970s when Cope began writing] there wasn't much encouragement for women to do what I wanted to do – i.e., tell it like it is' ... As Cope says, 'My parodies were a way of saying, 'OK. If that's how we're supposed to write, I'll do it' '...Cope's writing has been described as funny and accessible and as light verse. But Cope doesn't like the term 'light verse', she says, 'I detest the expression. It seems to imply that a poem with humour in it can't also be about something important or deeply felt.'(15)"

[25] See Jane Dowson and Alice Entwistle. *A History of Twentieth-Century British Women's Poetry*. They study "the major figures, including CharlotteMew, Sylvia Townsend Warner, Stevie Smith, Elizabeth Jennings, Sylvia Plath, Anne Stevenson, Eavan Boland, Carol Rumens, Denise Riley, Grace Nichols and Carol Ann Duffy." They reflect on the " continuing debates about the nature of women's poetry" and "offer new critical approaches to reading poems that engage with, for example, war, domesticity, Modernism, linguistic innovation, place, the dramatic monologue, Postmodernism and the lyric" (1).

poetry"[26] which foregrounds the poetics of the mundane and down to earth experiences, weeding out semantics of affected and extravagant style. This alternative popular poetic tradition contrasts with the "vatic model of poetry," (Delchamps 12) with its focus on "highly personal obscurity" (Delchamps 263). Cope's poem engages in "rhetorics of the self" and "social discourse" (Kinnahan xiii) so much that it harbors a double voice: the metatextual voice and the voice of those characters that are looking for partnership. Cope thereby strikes a compelling link between the original newspaper "hypotextual" frame of reference and the complicated contemporaneity. The metatextual "self-conscious"[27] dimension of the poem italicizes the poet's perceptive idiom of thought as to the representation of reality through alternative optics that takes into regard the intersection between the past tradition and the present concerns. Harold Bloom has it that "[g]reat writings is always rewriting or revisionism and is founded upon a reading that clears space for the self, or that so works to reopen old works to our fresh sufferings (11)."

Cope "reopens" the villanelle form and the carpe diem motif and re-inflects them with the outcries, sufferings, concerns and forms of the contemporary socio-cultural matrix. She also "reopens" the media space of the "Lonely Hearts" newspaper column and voices the discourse of its cultural politics. This sense of "rewriting" and "revisionism" of traditional forms by means of contemporary journalistic forms spells out a metatextual aspect whereby the poem reflects upon itself as a poetic text which incorporates socio-political, cultural and economic levels.

The poem, a textual construct as it is, plays out this intersection between culture, politics and poetry. Capitalizing on journalistic devices, everyday speech and pre-established tradition, Cope "mocks neoclassical diction" as well as "modernist" style,[28]clearing thereby a space of a new alternative poetry. Far from being a mere stylistic

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[26] Peter Childs, ed. *Encyclopedia of Contemporary British Culture* 21.

[27] On the idea of metatextuality and self-consciousness, see Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious*. She claims that "Metafiction is a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text. Most of the quotations are fairly contemporary. This is deliberate. Over the last twenty years, novelists have tended to become much more aware of the theoretical issues involved in constructing fictions. In consequence, their novels have tended to embody dimensions of self-reflexivity and formal uncertainty. What connects not only these quotations but also all of the very different writers whom one could refer to as broadly 'metafictional', is that they all explore a theory of fiction through the practice of writing fiction"(13).

[28] I am referring to Simon Denith who points out that "parody could be used to mock neoclassical diction itself, or for reasons of personal grudge-bearing, or to mock the pretensions of attempts at epic diction, or simply as a convenient comic handle on a contemporary topic." He claims that parodies "were published in single-authored volumes, and then in anthologies. This nineteenth-century tradition of parody still provides the staple of such late twentieth-century anthologies as the Faber Book of Nonsense Verse and The Faber Book of Parodies. It persists also in such forms as New Statesman competitions and in the work of, for example, the poet and parodist Wendy Cope, or such occasional publications as Poems Not on the Underground; A Parody, edited by 'Straphanger' (a reference to the 'Poems on the Underground' published as posters in the London Tube, where 'straphanging' is forced upon many commuters in the rush hour)" (117).

fad or slant, the parody of popular press aims to startle the reader into a new awareness of poetry as primarily a messaging medium. This finds confirmation in Margaret Roses' argument that in "parodying one text (or kind of text), the parody text holds up a mirror to its own fictional practices, so that it is at once a fiction and a fiction about fictions" (Denith 14-15). Cope, on her part, draws on the preset newspaper column as a public medium so that the poetic text becomes a social seat of communication reflecting upon the hidden muffled sufferings of those marginalized groups or categories of people deemed as "lonely hearts." She is aware of the importance of bringing into play new terms and forms to represent mainstream reality.

The poem is made up of six-rhymed stanzas in which two lines are repeated. This structure recalls that of the villanelle. It builds up through a leitmotif of statement and restatement of advertisements and questions: "Can someone make my simple wish come true?" and "Do you live in North London? Is it you?" The poem in this way morphs into a publicity shot made up of a series of advertisements displaying bio-data and preferences or "wishes." What is interesting is that the poet enacts a double action in a compelling way: Wendy Cope in this regard delineates the experience of a female "Jewish lady" in the course of reading across advertisements in a "lonely heart" newspaper column, while, at the same time, she engrafts the voice of the Jewish female speaker within the series of advertisements she is looking through. This spells out the speaker's commitment to those alienated characters; she does not stand at a distance from the experiences and details she is reading in the adverts. By using the aphoristic, telegraphic style of advertisements, Cope destabilizes the borderlines between the techniques of poetry writing and the techniques of advertisements. Both of them are interlaced and cooperate to help voice the notion of poetry as a cultural site of reflection. The poem intexts or engrafts journalistic devices in order to create a mode of thought which invigorates the lines of connection between the poetic and the social.

The poem opens emphatically, though playfully, on an interrogative construction: "Can someone make my simple wish come true?" This opening question is repeated throughout the poem in an alternate pattern (four times). It is a recurring question which is used as an organizing principle which holds the poem's thematic unity. The speaker keeps repeating the same question so that the addressee (a virtual addressee indeed) will not lose sight of the speaker's "simple wish." Seen from a different perspective, however, the recurrent question "Can someone make my simple wish come true?" may be read as a rhetorical question which does not seek an answer but is rather brought into play for the sake of its dramatic effect. The speaker poet is reflecting on the impossibility of realizing

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Expanding on the correlation between parody and modernism, he argues that "the course of twentieth-century poetic history in English was marked by dissensions over 'style' as emphatic as those of the preceding century. It was noted in Chapter 1 how the battles over Modernism were in part fought out through parody, with Pound's comic assault on 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' (see p. 35) marking one ground-clearing exercise for the new aesthetic. Equally the stylistic extremes of Modernist poetry provoked a series of parodies, executed with varying degrees of hostility. T.S. Eliot has been one persistent victim of such assaults, given the iconic status of The Waste Land (1922) as the quintessential Modernist poem." (118)

even "simple wishes." One may safely argue that the continual reference to the adjective "simple" points to the impossibility of wish fulfillment.

Wendy Cope capitalizes upon the popular form and character of the traditional villanelle poem. She thus animates the old poetic forms and inflects them with a contemporary coloring. The poem includes other echoes from tradition. It has a subversive aspect but it also plays out traditional motifs. The vein of 'seduction' and 'persuasion' in the poem alludes to the carpe diem motif in traditional poetry ("carpe diem" is a Latin expression which means "seize the day"). The poem in this respect can be read as a play on the carpe diem motif; it is a contemporary reworking of the carpe diem tradition. The carpe diem motif would dwell upon "the imminence of death, the self-pitying complaint, the suggestion that feeling is better than thinking, the insistence on the transforming power of love, and the proposition" (Rushworth 97). The process of 'seduction' or 'persuasion' manifests itself in the display of interests and preferences whereas the 'proposition' shows in the final stanza with the speaker's direct suggestion: "Please write (with photo) to Box 152."

But if characters in the traditional carpe diem motif are seeking carnal satisfaction, characters and the female speaker in this poem are looking for ontological fulfillment. The poem also highlights the idea that 'dating' has become absurd and ludicrous, especially with today's eharmony and match-finder systems; the poem shows how love has become impersonal; it is channelled through mechanic, electronic and digital system, and even how individuals are turned into "dividuals" and "masses" turn into "samples," "data," "markets," or "banks," to refer to "Postscript on the Societies of Control" by Gilles Deleuze (5).

But what is interesting is Cope's handling of lonely individuals and potential shared life between diverse individuals. The refrain– "can someone make my simple wish come true?"–frames an overwhelming sense of unity within diversity. The lonely hearts column gives various people belonging to different walks of life enough room to ruminate or publicize their needs and desires. Cope draws on the politics of genre which is operating in full force by enacting incessant interplay between journalism, media and villanelle to bring together various people within the same mediatized. The use of villanelle and newspaper column fleshes out a space where disparate voices come into common social/spatial frames showing loneliness but sharedness at the same time. The refrain, "Can someone make my simple wish come true?", unites those various "lonely hearts" who come to "share one voice, as well as one proxy home at the final line of the poem: 'Please write (with photo) to Box 152. / Who knows where it may lead once we've begun?'"[29]

As refrain is spatial, too, those figures of marginality are brought to the same space of the lonely hearts column which, in turn, undergoes another type of appropriation to fit the villanelle form of a poem. A new territory comes to the fore; but still, at the same time, it is "territorializing," "deterritorializing" and "reterritorializing" because those voices of social periphery are fictionalized and brought to bear on real people existing in social real

[29] Rory Waterman, *Wendy Cope* (2021), p. 10.

circumstances; they "deterritorialize", i.e. they "leave [their] territory"[30] and join another form of existence in which many "territories" coexist. The politics of genre are crucial in this regard. The intersection and interplay between genres unleash other signs and articulates other spaces of play. Those spaces of play are generic: the villanelle form of poetry and the newspaper column, "lonely hearts," are convoluted within the same poem form yielding thereby a mediatized form of poem. A reading of these spaces, too, involves the evocation of "territories" of the social margin relating to a "rag-tag crew of singletons"[31] who happen to advertise their attitudes to reach for people of the same social preferences.

This intersection opens up a space of "debate" while subverting the villanelle genre itself and, as Jason argues, highlighting "the potential of the villanelle for handling duality, dichotomy, and debate."[32] Typically enough, Cope's rare technique which consists in "cycling the refrain through different speakers"[33] multiplies the dormant potential of the villanelle refrain which originally relates to a "single speaker with a singular fixation" (Martiny 182). The speakers' repetends—as articulated by the refrain "can someone make my simple wish come true?"—concur to create a similar margin space. In this way, they leave/deterritorialize their personal/individual marginal territories to articulate a communal space of existence. In media terms, those "lonely hearts" adverts are visibly demarcated and plangently pronounced as a type of content platform marketing unfulfilled desires. The margin in this way takes center stage reflecting on social neglect and damage. Those social misfits undergo coextensive reduction and expansion processes; as they are reterritorialized in a mediatized poem, so to speak, they are reduced to puncta; each individual is seen as a punctum set off from the rest of other spaces; but, at the same time, each punctum expands to reach to other ones constituting a visible icon standing for hopelessness or failure. The "lonely hearts"column, fittingly then, stands out as a type of identikit profiling bereaved social outfits.

Cope's art of inventiveness strikes affinities with disparate genres to reflect on marginality. As John Strachan and Richard Terry point out,

> Cope here has both found poetry within, and also made poetry out of, the register of lonely hearts advertisements, where solitary individuals publicize their personal attractions and sketch an identikit of their ideal partner. Her poem, in which each stanza amounts to its own separate ad, is poignantly knowing about the sad parade of eccentricities which is a staple of the lonely hearts genre. The poem, however, also nurtures a sense that habitués of the personal columns are motivated by aspirations shared by all of us, no matter where we acquire our lovers: 'Can someone make my simple wish come true.'

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[30] See Pierre-André Boutang, Gilles Deleuze, Claire Parnet, and Charles J. Stivale. 2012. *L'abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze: avec Claire Parnet*. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e). See also Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (2004), *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 300.
[31] https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/lonely-hearts-wendy-cope/. Accessed 18/05/2022.
[32] Philip K Jason, "Modern Versions of the Villanelle," p. 144.
[33] Erik Martiny. *A Companion to Poetic Genre*, p. 182.

Cope's poem is both comic and plangent at the same time; but it is all the same rather one-dimensional as an exploration of a particular linguistic register.[34] It is true that the poem displays this one-dimensionality as it uses "a particular linguistic register" but Cope's playful way and hybrid method of fictionalization invigorate the poem with other dimensions. Bringing many levels of representation at the same poem serves to supplant traditional poetry. Intermingling villanelle form and journalistic form marks a change in terms of poetry reception; poetry, then, turns into a space of publicity and self-marketing. The poem gathers other generic dimensions and is mediatized through and through. While adopting aphoristic and pithy characteristics of the language of publicity, it also perpetuates the lyrical ring of the villanelle genre. Cope in this way provides us with another view of poetry in modern age when human life is commercialized and human beings are looked at as statistical numbers or tabulated along social categories of identification.

Poetry, in this way, turns into an imperial genre, digesting other genres and making use of them, to lay claim to a transient social reality. Cope's text, so to speak, can be read as an ars poetica setting forth new principles of poetry writing. It offers us another meta-textual reflection on poetry writing whereby attention is given not so much to contents but to the hybrid form itself which consists in bringing into play different genres relating to media and song. The poem in this regard is based not only on themes but rather upon the interplay between the various advert-like stanzas making up the poem.

"Lonely Hearts," then, both as poem and newspaper column, open up another space of figuration or social investigation.[35] Cope's poem touches on a history of the evolution of the villanelle form and mixes literary genre with the dint of social reality. It says so much by saying so little reflecting on the politics of genre, publicity and social strife, marginality, and damage. A plethora of voices are played out to relate to those zones of marginality. The add gives them room to speak; the villanelle refrain empowers them with incessant voice, and territorializes their experience in a specific social condition. It also deterritorializes and reterritorializes them as they leave the here and now space of modern Britain to relate to other zones of damage throughout the world. Those statements of personal likes also turn into concepts voicing stringent poetic endeavors to give voice to silenced voices of underrepresented groups. This poem is more than about lonely hearts; it is more about a new tendency and reflection on a new social poetry. It calls back those types of protest poetry and jazz forms as used by Langston Hughes to reflect upon an African-American identity.

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[34] John Strachan and Richard Terry, *Poetry*, p. 153.

[35] As Jason argues, "[t]he English villanelle derives from one of a number of related forms developed in France during the late renaissance. While most early villanelles celebrate pastoral life, many are notable for their simple delicacy of touch in handling a variety of themes" (136). With Cope, it is not about pastoral themes but rather about post-industrial societies.

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How To Be Human

In many's opinion, education is the key to most things as it allows for better thinking.
But can we please stop thinking for just two seconds?

Long hours studying and working on assignments,
devoting one's entire life to their studies,
the true self is lost upon the hard work of following one's passion.

Eventually who we are becomes nothing more than a name on a trophy.

No time to knit, no time to play guitar,
no time to go on walks or visit a museum or make dinner
or laugh with friends and family
or take a nap or zone out into space.

24 hours in a day to get a full 8 hours of sleep,
put in a 5 hour work day,
go to class for 3 hours factoring in commute times,
study and do work for 4 hours we all know it's more like double that,
but also see friends, take time for our mental health
who knows how long that'll take.

"Graduate early!"
"Fast track masters!"
"Let's get you into the rat race we've created so you can be 'productive' until you die!"

Slow down.

Stop making our eyes bleed from the screens and our hands cramp from the weight of the pen.

Allow us to have passions that are not profited from

that are valuable for no reason other than that they bring us joy.

Give us time to feel the strum of the guitar.
To savor the laughter of those we love and those we barely know.
Wander through museums.
Sip our coffee slowly.
Have a clear planner.
Enjoy the warm beds we hardly inhabit.
And maybe stare out the window for a while.

By embracing all of this,
We increase how we see
one another and ourselves
as humans.

Those differences,
those skills,
that love and passion
make us who we are.
Don't let the grind take them away.
In order to be human inside and outside of academic spaces, we need to be allowed to be human.

Not cogs in the machine of productivity and achievement.

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How They Said Goodbye

I stand with my hands high,
I surrender, please don't shoot me!
I am only a child, a woman, a man.
I am only human like you.

Sincerity used to be so simple,
when it had no labels.
Sincerity is now,
the mother carrying her sick child.
The bullets killing your neighbors.
The hunger taking children six feet underground.
The air strikes killing humanity.

Because, unfortunately,
sincerity it isn't you and I having a heart to heart.

It's about the smiling emoji I sent you last night.
It's about the gift you never bought me.
It's about the man labeled a hero for killing an innocent child.

Because, sincerity is now,
labeled with money.

The billions you have that could save the world three times over
you choose to hide.

But why?

You plan to take it to the Afterlife?
Leave it for your child who will never know the definition of need?

No, because you are greedy.
Because you chose to be blind to everything.
Because you cover your eyes, your ears, and your mouth.

Your morals going south,
letting the opinions of society become your own.
The lies you are fed become your ideology,
because there is no sincerity.

I stand with my hands high,
I surrender, I swear,
please don't shoot me!
I am only a child, a woman, a man,
because I am only human like you!

The newspaper,
the news you read,
call me a conspiracy theorist,
because that textbook you idealize,
is really just ideas theorized.

Ideas I don't trust
because, yes, it may be true,
but it's only a part of the story.

And ¼ of the story is never the whole story.

So you tell me why I should believe anything but the truth?
Tell me why I should trust
the media that isn't telling me everything.
You should tell me why the world becomes a
better place once the news stops broadcasting
all the deaths, all the pain they are suffering.

That bloody reality that you and I don't face?

Believe me, it's there.

But what's easier than living a life full of blind lies?
Nothing.

Because you and I don't cry to sleep,
or worry about the father that might never make it home.

The sister that's lost in the sea.

The brother that holds a gun to sleep.

The mother who gave up her life to save her child's.

You and I don't feel that
or experience that.
We just see it.
We just watch the old men in black suits making decisions
In which we youngsters fight to death.

Now, that is your sincerity
because there is no way
for our society to see passed
the make believe
when it is common belief.

I stand with my hands high!
I surrender, I swear
please don't shoot me!
I am only a child, a woman, a man,
because I am only human like you.