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Editor's Note

The past few years have seen some dramatic shake-ups in the format of the *KPR*: when I took over as editor in 2019, I produced, for the first time, a double issue of our journal that included the proceedings of both the 2018 and 2019 meetings of the KPA. At that point I was excited to be starting my tenure with double the number of excellent essays on a variety of academic and pedagogical subjects, as well as pertinent book reviews honoring authors from the region of Appalachia. That volume also included, for the first time, outstanding creative work from our organization's members, reflecting the important role of creative work in our annual meetings. Once that double issue was published, I figured that things would be smooth sailing going forward.

Then COVID-19 happened. When, in September 2019, we were planning our 2020 meeting at Campbellsville University, no one could have imagined what was on the horizon. Barely a week before anyone had heard the word "lockdown," our association's members met during what was, unbeknownst to us at the time, the last normal weekend that any of us was to experience for the foreseeable future.

For me, and for many others, the weekend of March 6-7, 2020 was the last time we saw colleagues face-to-face, attended scholarly papers and creative presentations in person, discussed our opinions in a collegial way in the same room without wearing masks, and ate together during a casual business meeting without first disinfecting our surroundings and sitting 6 feet apart. I feel humbled and privileged to have been part of this conference in Campbellsville and so grateful to have seen my colleagues in fine form, reading incisive papers and sharing their stellar creative visions before the pandemic forced us into isolation.

Because of the unimaginable events of the past months, this version of the *KPR* is again an extraordinary one. As we are unable to meet in person for our 2021 conference, volume 35 of the journal will be published as an electronic document on our website (thekpa.org) before our March 2021 conference, which will be held entirely online. The papers and creative work selected for publication from the 2021 meeting will comprise volume 36 and will be added to this document and, if all goes well, both volumes will then be published in paper format and made available to attendees of our 2022 conference, which we all fervently hope will take place face to face in a different world from the one in which we are presently living.

In spite of our current situation, some things have not changed: once again, I would like to thank all our contributors; our authorship includes people from every echelon of the profession, from emeritus professor to undergraduate student; this opportunity to publish alongside each other, share scholarship, and learn from each other has always been one of the special and distinguishing characteristics of our organization.

I would also like to extend my warmest thanks to the numerous members of the editorial board and to my two jewels of editorial assistants, Olyvia Neal and Jalyn

Findley, for all their help during a time when faculty members are virtually relearning their jobs and students are being educated in a way they never bargained for. Our learning curve has been steep in both cases, and this makes me even more grateful for the time that these KPA members have sacrificed to contribute to the selection and editorial process in order to make the *KPR* the best journal it can be.

Thank you all so much.

Above all, stay safe.

Karen Taylor
Morehead State University

2020 Presidential Address: The History of Garbage

By David Powell
Union College

An old joke: Garbage is garbage, but the *history* of garbage is scholarship.

Like any good joke, it has a few possible angles, all of which have a grain of truth. We—scholars—make careers of making seemingly unimportant things important. Garbage, like most human expression, is ephemera bound for the landfill. We’re the smudged salvage crew, picking through the refuse, saying, “wait a sec . . . this one’s not quite done for. And in fact, when you consider it in light of this other little bit that got thrown away, we can build a whole narrative about how we live and perceive!” We scholars channel that human compulsion toward understanding beyond the big-ticket items to take note of how the little stuff—the letters, the apprentice works, the pop culture—come together to make the big cultural moments vital.

The joke could, of course be read in a less flattering light. We—scholars—are thought by some to spend our careers making something out of nothing. To the chagrin of many laypeople, we *overanalyze*. We’re the ones that ruin movies and can’t find simple pleasure in John Grisham novels. We don’t just look at a picture and feel its impact; we start to break the image down into its parts to understand why it has the impact it does. We notice problematic representations. We tend to be blasé because any lack of originality hits us harder. We habitually pick at consciousness rather than simply inhabit it. It’s a process that can be difficult to explain, must less justify, to those outside the academic humanities. Our squabbles and fixations are at best esoteric to outsiders, often, no doubt, silly. I, personally, have been witness to a conversation that approximated a shouting match that came nigh on to fisticuffs over whether *The Red Badge of Courage* was best classified a work of Realism or Naturalism. As a result of this conversation, not one word of the novel changed.

The authors to whom we devote our careers are themselves often skeptical of the usefulness of humanities scholarship. Michael Chabon, the 2001 winner of the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, has argued that “there is no more useless activity than that of periodization, in particular cultural history, into discrete eras—the Jazz Age, the Greatest Generation, the Eisenhower years, the Sixties” because “such periods can never be honestly articulated without recourse to so many demurrals and arbitrary demarcations, and the granting of so many exceptions, as to render them practically useless for any kind of serious historical purpose” (199). He was piggybacking on Ralph Waldo Emerson, who wrote that “historically, there is thought to be a difference in the ideas which predominate over successive epochs, and there are data for marking the genius of the Classic, of the Romantic, and now of the Reflective or Philosophical age.” Emerson noted that due to his “views . . . of the oneness or the

identity of the mind through all individuals, [he did] not much dwell on these differences” (66). This compulsion to break the history of human expression and thought into discrete periods, to taxonomize so as to understand, is foundational to our work. And yet we are cautioned against it by those we seek to classify. They are territorial. As Emerson elsewhere cautioned: “Shakespeare is the only biographer of Shakespeare, and even he can tell nothing except to the Shakespeare in us, that is, to our most apprehensive and sympathetic hour” (256). Or the poet Billy Collins, who asks “Would anyone care to join me / in flicking a few pebbles in the direction / of teachers who are fond of asking the question: / ‘What is the poet trying to say?’ / as if Thomas Hardy and Emily Dickinson / had struggled but ultimately failed in their efforts— / inarticulate wretches that they were, / biting their pens and staring out the window for a clue” (60). So what are we scholars to do?

Kentucky’s recent governor was no diplomat in office, as even his supporters will concede. Matt Bevin had a particular habit of butting heads with teachers at all levels. Most famous, perhaps, was his dust-up with educators over the state’s troubled pension system, but his administration also had a habit of poking at the relevance of the liberal arts in higher education. His Lieutenant Governor, Jenean Hampton, ruffled feathers by noting that one shouldn’t major in history “unless you have a job lined up,” comments that echoed Bevin’s earlier assertion that “there will be more incentives to electrical engineers than to French literature majors” and that “all the people in the world that want to study French literature can do so, they are just not going to be subsidized by the taxpayer like engineers” (Bruggers).

On one level, such comments aren’t problematic. Indisputable is the fact that appropriations for humanities education should account for somewhere between zero and one hundred percent of the state budget. The precise point along that spectrum that best serves the interest of society is difficult to pin down, and certainly red-versus-blue entrenchment isn’t helpful in figuring out where that point is. But the governor’s statement wasn’t made in a vacuum; it represents, even if incidentally, a problem that the humanities has with popular perception in general.

Bevin lined up a humanities discipline against engineering—and not just any humanities, but French literature and not just any engineering, but electrical. Electrical engineering doesn’t make a bridge or generate artificial intelligence. It’s a discipline of pure application, without theory, emotional expressiveness, or philosophical caution. And it was levied against French literature. Not literature in general—and not American literature, certainly—but a foreign literature typically without immediate application in Kentucky. And while it’s troubling that a state leader might express hostility toward French literature—which, of course, drains a fraction of a percent of state education funding—what should bother each of us far more is that he was expressing a common exasperation. The fact is that our jobs don’t produce comfort or security, certainly not in the obvious ways that engineering or medicine do. Higher education has now, for the better part of two centuries, inched toward practical relevance as a measure of success, a process accelerated by the ubiquity of public funding, which entails a demand for justification for funds explicable to the public. In education, populism inherently glares at refinement because, at the end of the day, when you have a heart attack you want the person sitting next to you to have a bachelor’s degree in nursing more than a bachelor’s degree in poetry.

Pragmatically, many have tried to justify literary studies in practical terms. “Learn history to avoid the mistakes of the past” some have said, yet atrocities happen often in educated societies, and often as a direct result of familiarity with past events. Some suggest that the humanities, in their mental gymnastics, train more powerful and flexible minds, but no data yet show that humanities are the best

or only method of doing so. Some have asserted that studying literature can make us better people in some moral or ethical sense, that they can make our sense of empathy more acutely felt, but those who work in the field know that humanists, the best-read people on earth, are sometimes the least humane, that there is little correlation between being well-read and being kind. These attempts at objective justifications are not only inadequate to defend the humanities, they erode the subjective central mission of art and literature—the pursuit of a truth beyond literal expression. Explaining them in literal terms, we can expect, will remain a fruitless endeavor.

Several years ago, when I was a graduate student at the University of Georgia, the Southeastern Conference negotiated a multi-billion dollar television rights deal with ESPN. My father was outraged on my behalf. “They’ve got all these billions of dollars,” he said, “and they pay you twelve grand?!” (or whatever the going rate was for an English TA). “Well, yeah,” I replied, well aware of the situational pragmatics, “but how many football games did you watch last year?” “A lot,” he said. “And how many books did you read?” He declined to answer. My dad doesn’t lack intelligence or curiosity by any means, but he is in line with much of our population. Studies have noted a precipitous decline in literary reading among even the educated. Americans are more likely to have kept a garden in the previous twelve months than to have read a single novel. The reading that does happen tends not to be difficult reading.

We’re in a tough place, an apparently perpetually tough place. Well established is the fact that the humanities have always been met with skepticism. Classical rhetoric is replete with attempts to justify itself. Jesus communicated in parables, but Philip Sidney still had to defend the power of truth in ostensible lies. Today, humanities majors are outnumbered by vocational majors roughly ten to one nationwide. Many of us have “doctor” in front of our names, but we have to explain that we don’t save lives. It’s nice to tell someone you’re a professor, but as soon as “English” precedes it, you’re met with the response “oh, my grammar is awful.” Because that’s what we do. Our work is neither easily explicable nor concretely beneficial. But that’s okay. It’s not supposed to be.

In the 1930s, American author Willa Cather faced criticism that her writing lacked pertinence. She wrote about common things mostly, but did so with an eye to art and to classical forms. She did not, as was the mode of the moment, write in the belief that the author’s obligation was to precipitate social change. In short, she was crotchety. But she was nearing the end of a decorated, and still under-rated, career, and had earned the right to be so. Facing her critics, she published a letter in *Commonweal* magazine in 1936 that read in part:

When the world is in a bad way, we are told, it is the business of the composer and the poet to devote himself to propaganda and fan the flames of indignation . . . [b]ut the world has a habit of being in a bad way from time to time, and art has never contributed anything to help matters—except escape. Hundreds of years ago, before European civilization had touched this continent, the Indian women in the old rock-perched pueblos of the Southwest were painting geometrical patterns on the jars in which they carried water up from the streams. Why did they take the trouble? These people lived under the perpetual threat of drought and famine; they often shaped their graceful cooking pots when they had nothing to cook in them. Anyone who looks over a collection of pre-historic Indian pottery dug up from old burial-mounds knows at once that the potters experimented with form and color to gratify something that had no concern with food and shelter. The major arts (poetry, painting, architecture, sculpture, music)

have a pedigree all their own. They did not come into being as a means of increasing the game supply or promoting tribal security. They sprang from an unaccountable predilection of the one unaccountable thing in man. (968)

Cather built a career exploring this idea of the “one unaccountable thing in man.” Cather was also a woman of business, and the term “unaccountable” would have been meaningful to her. It would represent a liability balanced against an asset. For her, the human compulsion to art wasn’t balanced against something explicable. Aesthetics don’t need to be justified. And, in fact, justify them or not, they are inevitable.

Humans can’t create anything purely utilitarian. What was Cather’s “pre-historic Indian pottery”? Artisan-grade craftwork to be sold for \$200 each in upscale Santa Fe gift shops? No. They were dishware. Bowls. Pots. Plates. Ladles. Used as long as they were useful and then set aside. As garbage. And yet they held experiments with “form and color to gratify something that had no concern with food and shelter.” Consider our own dinnerware for tonight’s banquet. These plates were round. They didn’t have to be. They could have been square. They had decorative gold fringes. Why? The decorations don’t make the food any more nourishing. To make something useful, we must also make decisions about how that usefulness fits into our unaccountable compulsion toward art. The designs on those earthenware pots were declarations of humanity. Art is precisely—to the smallest fraction of a percent—as inevitable as people. We don’t do things randomly, and we don’t make anything without choices as to how that thing will represent us. And as long as there is art there will be people like us that guard and explore it because others will always want to understand it, let popular skepticism and budget dollars fall as they might.

Consider that the collected work of Johann Sebastian Bach takes up 155 CDs. Alexandre Dumas published nearly 300 works in his life. Shakespeare’s total output covers nearly 1,000,000 words. All of these, even the B-sides, are the work of interesting human minds that had the courage to express themselves and the capacity and circumstances to make significant impacts. *Hamlet* is less than 30,000 words. Bach’s Toccata and Fugue in d minor is less than ten minutes. Who tends to all the rest, the brilliant and overlooked remainder, if not humanities scholars? In recent years, two books by Walt Whitman—a temperance novel and the quirky and fascinating “Guide to Manly Health and Training”—have been recovered and published thanks to an enterprising literary studies grad student (Schuessler). Ten years ago, they were garbage. Cather published around half a million words of criticism and commentary within about a year of graduating from college; the vast majority of this content was published anonymously or pseudonymously. Without the hard work of just a few Cather scholars, picking through old newspapers, these writings and the invaluable perspective they provide on Cather’s work would be left in the junkheap of cultural history. The Greek playwright Sophocles was thought to have written 123 plays. Seven survive. We wouldn’t be down 116 important plays had we had more drama professors. How many Sophocleses have we missed altogether? The writer Charles Chesnutt seems to have halted an otherwise prolific fiction career upon joining the leadership team of the newly-formed NAACP in 1910. Is there anyone in this room who really believes a great writer can just walk away, that there’s not a box of Chesnutt’s late stories locked up in a forgotten cabinet in the back of an antique store somewhere in rural Ohio? It’s out there. And without the trained eye of a literary scholar, those stories, like the thousands of other essential artifacts of human culture waiting to be brought out of the dustbin of

history, remain refuse. Think of the importance of us looking for the overlooked, especially in the context of an expanding canon.

And it's not just the lost artifacts that we represent. I'll go to my grave believing that "The Old Man at the Bridge" is Hemingway's best short story, that *Flags in the Dust* is Faulkner's best novel, that Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* is more than a warm-up for *Gatsby*, that Irwin Shaw is one of the top American fiction writers, full stop. But without me making those claims, without each of you shining lights into your own corners of human culture, much of who we all are and have been will remain lost to history. And that's why we—scholars—are here, to get the individual angles on how humanity works.

Garbage is garbage. But the history of garbage is scholarship. And scholarship is what ensures the good stuff doesn't get thrown away for keeps.

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Of Death and Poetry in Homer's *Iliad*

By Valerio Caldesi Valeri
University of Kentucky

In the proem, the ominous nine verses opening Homer's *Iliad*, death looms large.¹ Conjuring the voice of a goddess to aid with his feat, the poet promises casualties of unparalleled magnitude in the Greek ranks stationed at Troy, painting those losses as a dreadful consequence of Achilles' rage. As the narrative reveals in the course of the first book, Achilles, the most accomplished Achaean fighter, will resolve to withdraw from the battlefield, a rage-fueled decision following his altercation with the commander-in-chief Agamemnon. Achilles' absence will in turn result in an increased death rate for the Achaean Greeks. The text of the proem reads as follows:

μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος
οὐλομένην, ἣ μυρὶ Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε' ἔθηκε,
πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν
ἡρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἑλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν
οἰωνοῖσι τε πᾶσι, Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή,
ἐξ οὗ δὴ τὰ πρῶτα διαστήτην ἐρίσαντε
Ἀτρεΐδης τε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν καὶ δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.
τίς τ' ἄρ σφωε θεῶν ἑριδι ζυνέηκε μάχεσθαι;
(Homer, *Iliad* 1.1-9)

The rage, sing o goddess, of Achilles son of Peleus,
the hateful rage that caused the Achaeans immeasurable anguish,
flung into Hades many valiant souls
of heroes and made them prey of dogs
and all sorts of birds, and the plan of Zeus was accomplished,
since the very first time they parted in disagreement,
the lord of men, son of Atreus, [Agamemnon] and godlike Achilles.
Who among the gods set them to wrangle against each other?
The son of Leto and Zeus [the god Apollo].²

The proem dwells on the incalculable toll exacted by the loss of human life, drawing attention to the metaphysical aspects as well as the physicality of death: the brutal and rapid departure of brave souls plunged into the realm of the Underworld is evoked along with the defilement to which the unburied corpses of mighty Achaean heroes are exposed. The thematic promise foregrounded in the proem, however, remains unfulfilled for a good fifth of the entire poem. In actuality, not a single demise occurs in the main narrative time for some two thousand five hundred

verses until the Greek king Elephenor perishes, stabbed by a spear piercing his side (*Iliad* 4.467-70). After this prolonged delay, the work finally realigns with the expectations generated by the proem, detailing fifty-two deaths of Achaean heroes in the remaining twenty books.³

The present essay explores a possible rationale for the poet's momentary choice to shrink away from treating death after suggesting extensive and immediate coverage of it in the proem. That Homer toys with the expectations of an audience who is already somewhat familiar with the epic material is a point that scholars have long recognized.⁴ In 1992, for instance, James Morrison dedicated a book-length monograph to the topic of what he termed 'Homeric misdirection,' concluding that Homer's poetic craft relies precisely on destabilizing his public's knowledge of established storylines (109-118). One could argue that hardly any *locus* within a text can occupy a more prominent position for a case of misdirection than its prologue. While Morrison did not discuss the Iliadic proem, Brian Satterfield has more recently focused on contradictions between what is announced in the proem and the story that unfolds in the rest of the poem. Like Morrison, Satterfield interprets those discrepancies as a device meant to underscore the author's break from tradition and his ability to introduce new and bold concepts such as the acknowledgment that even enemies are entitled to burial (6-7). Combining the two approaches, this piece contends that, in the proem of the *Iliad*, Homer builds up the audience's anticipation of the kind of subject matter that would be appropriate for epic poetry, death, only to dissolve the genre conventions. In delaying the death of the Greek heroes for four entire books, the poet seems to offer a virtuoso demonstration that the kind of martial poetry he composes does not need to feature manslaughter in order to provide entertainment for his audience.

In and of itself, the very first book gives a taste of the broad range of situations that the epic poet can cover. First, the book progresses from the human to the divine realm, beginning with the all-too-earthly confrontation between Achilles and Agamemnon (*Iliad* 1.121-303) and concluding with the banquet that the gods held on the peak of Mt. Olympus (*Iliad* 1.601-611). Second, the sheer number of circumstances upon which the book touches between its inception and ending is quite impressive.

The poet begins by describing in detail the practices in use for the ransom of a war prisoner: namely, the entreaty speech of Apollo's priest who attempts to secure his daughter's return home, the Greek army's positive response to it, and Agamemnon's final and spiteful decision to reject the ransom (*Iliad* 1.12-32). The slighted priest's prayer to Apollo is then quoted, thus illustrating the utilitarian outlook that the Greeks had on religion, a mere tool to obtain favors from the gods (*Iliad* 1.37-42). Thereupon follows Apollo's punishment of the Achaeans struck to death by his darts (*Iliad* 1.43-52).⁵ the deity's response signals at once the importance of paying respect to religious figures, the gods' dominance over men and their ability to interfere with human life.

Next, the poet moves on to giving the audience an insight into the dynamics taking shape within the Greek army: he lingers on the negotiation of power relations and threat speeches exchanged between an acclaimed leader like Agamemnon and a consummate soldier like Achilles (*Iliad* 1.121-244). The rift escalates to the extent that an oath is reported verbatim to cement the irrevocability of Achilles' resolution to abandon the war (*Iliad* 1.233-244). The introduction at *Iliad* 1.247 of Nestor, a wise mediator who attempts a conciliation between the two, serves to outline the traits of the ideal hero, understood as a man of action but also a skilled rhetorician, but the mediation tragically fails.

Leaving behind the politics of war and the public sphere, Homer then sketches a vignette of intimate family life as Achilles discloses to his goddess mother the unbearable slight he suffered at the hands of Agamemnon (*Iliad* 1.351-412). When the goddess Thetis indulges her son, promising to intercede with Zeus (*Iliad* 1.413-427), the scene quickly shifts to the Achaean ship sent to surrender the priest's daughter: as the ship docks at the city, we are treated to a thorough description of nautical procedures (*Iliad* 1.432-439). Once the daughter and father are reunited, the audience is transported to Olympus. There, Achilles' mother secures Zeus' commitment to decimate the Greeks, while the hierarchy of power with Zeus on top of the pyramid is affirmed and tensions are resolved through a feast molded after Greek customs (*Iliad* 1.493-611).

In sum, religion, politics, family ties, public and private affairs, the notion of decorum, ideals and realities, seafaring protocols, are all expertly interwoven and contribute to the kaleidoscope-like quality of this book. All along, however, the overhanging specter of death is not forgotten. In fact, Homer does deliver a cursory treatment of the deaths Apollo inflicts upon the Achaeans, yet this description does not even span the full length of a single verse (*Iliad* 1.52) and, inserted as it is in a flashback that details the circumstances prior to the quarrel between the two Greek heroes, is placed outside the main narrative time. The poet has also Achilles, offended by Agamemnon, contemplate gutting the general on the spot, but that scenario never materializes (again, an attempted misdirection) thanks to the providential intervention of the goddess Athena, who appeases the hero's murderous temper (*Iliad* 1.188-218). In spite of the prominence it is given in the proem, death is thus effectively relegated to the background, one among the many experiences allotted to humans.

A remarkable display of subjects that epic poetry can treat other than death, the first book of the *Iliad* also underscores the typical role of the poet through the figure of Apollo. Arguably, the poet fashions his own persona after the god. In the proem, as we have seen, the poet invokes an unnamed goddess, presumably a Muse, whose words he borrows to commence his poetry. The bard thus presents himself as lending musical accompaniment to the goddess' verses. In the context of the divine feast that concludes the book, Apollo serves precisely the same role. The text reads as follows:

ὥς τότε μὲν πρόπαν ἦμαρ ἐς ἡέλιον καταδύντα
δαίνυντ', οὐδέ τι θυμὸς ἐδεύετο δαιτὸς ἔϊσης,
οὐ μὲν φόρμιγγος περικαλλέος ἦν ἔχ' Ἀπόλλων,
Μουσάων θ' αἰ ᾄδειον ἀμειβόμεναι ὅπῃ καλῇ.
(Homer, *Iliad* 1.601-4)

Thus, then, for the whole day until sundown [the gods]
feasted, their desire of a shared meal did not go amiss at all,
nor did that of the gorgeous lyre that Apollo held,
or of the Muses who were singing in response with their delightful voice.

The gods gathered at the banquet crave and enjoy the musical performance of Apollo, who plays with his lyre a tune enriched by the Muses' verses. In an effective ring composition technique that connects beginning and end of the book, Apollo and the poet identify with one another. A mirror and divine counterpart of the poet, Apollo is also openly acknowledged as the initiator of the storyline (*Iliad* 1.8).⁶ By slaughtering the Achaeans, the god, in fact, precipitates the assembly of the Achaeans that led to the dispute pitting Achilles against Agamemnon. The god, thus,

aptly encapsulates the dual function of the poet as entertainer as well as engine of the narrative. Moreover, Apollo enters the narrative as a slayer of men. The excerpt reads as follows:

(Φοῖβος Απόλλων)
βῆ δὲ κατ' Οὐλύμποιο καρήνων χροόμενος κῆρ,
τόξ' ὥμοισιν ἔχων ἀμφοτερέα τε φαρέτριν·
ἔκλαγξαν δ' ἄρ' οἵστοι ἐπ' ὤμων χροόμενοι,
αὐτοῦ κινήθέντος· ὃ δ' ἦϊε νυκτὶ ἐοικώς.
ἔζετ' ἔπειτ' ἀπάνευθε νεῶν, μετὰ δ' ἰὸν ἔηκε·
δεινὴ δὲ κλαγγή γένετ' ἀργυρέοιο βιοῖο·
οὐρῆας μὲν πρῶτον ἐπώχετο καὶ κύνας ἀργούς,
αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' αὐτοῖσι βέλος ἐχεπευκὲς ἐφείς
βάλλ'· αἰεὶ δὲ πυραὶ νεκρῶν καίοντο θαμειαί.
(Homer, *Iliad* 1.44-52)

(Phoebus Apollo)
stepped down from the peaks of Olympus furious in his heart
bearing on his shoulders the arrows and the quiver closed on both sides;
darts rattled/vibrated (*klazō*) on the shoulders of the angry one
as he moved; he was coming down like the night.
He then settled away from the ships and fired one arrow;
frightening was the vibration (*klangē*) of the silver bow;
at first he was attacking mules and swift dogs,
but then at the men themselves his piercing arrow
he began to aim; heaps of corpses were incessantly burning on pyres.

The terms employed for the vibration of the arrows and bow assume particular significance in the context. The verb *klazō* applied to the arrows collected in the god's quiver is usually understood to denote a rattling sound. It must be observed, however, that the verb is also an appropriate choice for the sound that the musician can produce by playing the lyre (Euripides, *Ion* 905) as well as the sound that the god Pan elicits from his pipes (*Homeric Hymn to Pan* 14). Belonging to the same semantic range as the verb, the noun *klangē* in the *Iliad* describes the vibration of Apollo's bowstring, but once again is also used of musical instruments in 4th-century BCE lyric poetry and comedy (Telestes 4 and Mnesimachus 4.57) and of a song in 5th-century tragedy (Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 208). The tools that Apollo wields to engender death, arrows and bow, are therefore closely associated with the musical instruments that the poet plays. The language strongly suggests that the accoutrements of Apollo, the lyre and bow, are not as incompatible as one may think at first sight and confirms the intimate connection between poetry and death: in Apollo, they coexist one with the other, inseparably. As Apollo brings death upon the Achaeans, he is accomplishing, from a metapoetic standpoint, the task expected of the poet.

Whereas Homer seems to identify with the portrayal of Apollo as masterful entertainer and shaper of the plotline, the bard ultimately parts ways with the very nexus that he ascribes to Apollo, that between death and poetry. After setting up the traditional focus of epic poetry on death in the proem and through Apollo in the narrative, the poet shifts gears, momentarily but significantly, challenging that very notion in the first and the next three books. It is a bold move and a programmatic statement meant to vindicate a far more expansive role and scope for the poet's work. The broad spectrum of disparate circumstances that the poet explores in the

first book constitutes a powerful illustration of the immense potential of death-free epic poetry. The poet reminds the audience that his poetry, far from being narrowly confined to the final moment in men's existence, is capable of capturing and replicating the *totality* of human experience.⁷ Homer, thus, redefines the latitude of epic poetry suggesting that, through it, the poet can explore the complexity and multiplicity of reality. The model represented by Apollo, at once poet, slayer of men and entertainer, implicates a connection between death and the entertainment value of poetry. Certainly, Homer will follow that model for most of the *Iliad*, delighting his audience with the goriest descriptions of death scenes one could ever imagine: heads severed but still dangling from the neck through a flap of skin (*Iliad* 16.335-41), eyeballs rolling out of crushed skulls (*Iliad* 16.737-50), and spears piercing necks and internally slashing the root of tongues (*Iliad* 5.290-293). In the initial books of his poem, however, the ancient bard provides a healthy reminder that entertainment can equally derive from the astounding power of his art to represent the totality and complexity of life.

Notes

¹ The centrality of death in the *Iliad* is a by-product of the Homeric conception of heroic life. Death on the battlefield has been unanimously construed as an imperative for the Iliadic heroes, who, while aiming to survive the continuous frays, can paradoxically claim everlasting fame for themselves only through a glorious demise. See, most recently, Horn, 381-82 with bibliography in note 101. On life and death as themes vital to the *Iliad*, see Garland, 52-53 and Morrison (Patterns), 142-143.

² All English translations from the Greek provided in this article are the author's.

³ Figures along with other statistics in Garland, 43.

⁴ Quoting Donald Lateiner, "oral story-tellers succeed by both frustrating and fulfilling face-to-face audience expectations" (14).

⁵ Note how the mass murder Apollo deals the Achaean Greeks here is *not* the slew of deaths that Homer had promised his audience in the proem. There, the poet qualified Achaean deaths as the result of Achilles' rage, a rage which arises only later in the first book. In this context, we are not in the main narrative time, rather in a flashback that accounts for the genesis of that rage. Hence, I would read the summary, yet powerful description of Apollo's mayhem of the Greeks with its haunting image of pyres consuming corpses in the flames (*Iliad* 1.52) as a tease on the poet's part aimed at building anticipation for later descriptions of deaths resulting from Achilles' rage.

⁶ The agency of Apollo in triggering the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon may be understood to be at odds with the proem's indication that the plan of Zeus was at work in the genesis of the men's argument: see the discussion in Satterfield (14-18). Zeus, in fact, seems to play no direct role whatsoever in the strife. For our purposes, the glaring discrepancy could ultimately serve the purpose of redirecting attention to Apollo, a pivotal figure for the poet.

⁷ The totality in content coverage to which epic poetry seems to aspire matches its tendency to subsume all other genres. For the concept of epic as 'super-genre' or 'omnibus genre,' see Foley and Martin, respectively.

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Verona as Collina: The Idea of the Vestal Virgin in Early Modern Literature

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Setting aside very loose adaptations such as *The Lion King* and fanciful biographies like *Shakespeare in Love*, the two highest grossing Shakespeare films of all time are Baz Luhrman's 1996 *Romeo+Juliet* and Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 *Romeo and Juliet* (Adamczyk). This is the one Shakespeare play the majority of my first-year students have read in high school, as I first encountered it myself; if my students are to be believed, many have substituted a viewing of one the films above for actually reading the play, and I can attest that this tradition reaches back at least to my own school days. Given this, chances are that the last three generations of Americans are largely unaware of one of the most wrenchingly horrific scenes in this most famous play, as neither director includes it in his respective film. Juliet has a soliloquy in Act 4, Scene 3 as she prepares herself to drink the death-mimicking potion provided by the Friar, entertaining a litany of mental terrors of what may follow. She first imagines what will happen if the potion doesn't work, and resolves to kill herself rather than be married to Paris the next day; then, she considers that perhaps the Friar's potion will kill her outright, saving him from any retribution for marrying her to Romeo in the first place. Her last fear is the most potent, however, and deserves quotation at some length:

How if, when I am laid into the tomb,
I wake before the time that Romeo
Come to redeem me? There's a fearful point.
Shall I not then be stifled in the vault,
To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in,
And there die strangled ere my Romeo comes?
Or if I live, is it not very like
The horrible conceit of death and night,
Together with the terror of the place . . .
Alack, alack, is it not like that I,
So early waking, what with loathsome smells,
And shrieks like mandrakes torn out of the earth,
That living mortals, hearing them, run mad—
And, in this rage, with some great kinsman's bone,
As with a club, dash out my desperate brains? (4.3.30-54)

Being buried alive might well be the most horrific fate imaginable; while modern funerary practices have mostly eliminated any chance of it happening today,

even the most cursory research into the topic reveals it as a widespread fear up until the modern age. This paper will explore how the threat of live burial became a potent motif associated with a young woman's exercise of sexual choice outside the paternal and religious boundaries meant to contain it in two of the more popular texts of the Early Modern period: *Romeo and Juliet* and Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*.

It is easy to understand why Zeffirelli and Luhrman would cut Juliet's monologue about live burial; a twentieth-century audience is far more familiar with knives (or guns, as Luhrman uses) and even poison as means of death. Being buried alive conjures images of Edgar Allan Poe and nineteenth-century melodrama, which does not fit the tone of either film. However, for Shakespeare's contemporary audience, the live burial Juliet so fears would perhaps have resonated as powerfully as connected to punishment for the exercise of female sexual choice as the cup or dagger, as they had a direct example referenced in some of the most popular works of the day: the historical legend of Rome's Vestal Virgins, and the particular way this legend became entwined with erotic literature contemporaneously popular with *Romeo and Juliet*.

The first account we have of the Vestal Virgins comes to us from Plutarch's "Life of Numa Pompilius." He begins by describing the office of the *pontifex maximus*, and has Numa founding the order of the Vestals under that high priest's direct and sole supervision. Their chief role was to ensure a flame be kept perpetually burning in their temple in the Forum, in imitation of similar perpetual flames in Athens and at Delphi. However, while those flames were tended by widows past the time of marriage, the Roman Vestals were held to a different standard of sexual purity; according to Plutarch:

The statutes prescribed by Numa for the vestals were these: that they should take a vow of virginity for the space of thirty years, the first ten of which they were to spend in learning their duties, the second ten in performing them, and the remaining ten in teaching and instructing others. (Para. 15)

Plutarch goes on to note that while the Vestals could marry after their thirty-year term had ended, very few did so (Para. 16).

In compensation for this sacrifice of their sexual prime, the Vestals did receive many privileges, attested to by Robin Lorsch Wildfang in her book, *Rome's Vestal Virgins*. In many ways these privileges made them the legal equal of a man (they could make their own wills and administer their own affairs) (64) and in other ways making them far more than the common man: they attended gladiatorial games in a box next to the emperor (44), lived in a palace near their temple in the forum, had a limited power to pardon condemned men, and were granted the very rare privilege of being buried within the city of Rome itself. While a woman in Rome could gain great favor by becoming the consort of the Emperor or another politically powerful man, the Vestals achieved their status through their virginity. If there were any doubt that their status depended on the denial of their sexuality, Plutarch's description of the punishments they were subject to immediately quells it:

[S]he that has broken her vow is buried alive near the gate called Collina, where a little mound of earth stands inside the city. The culprit herself is put in a litter, which they cover over, and tie her down with cords on it, so that nothing she utters may be heard . . . the prisoner, being still covered, and placing her upon the steps that lead down to the cell, turns away his face with the rest of the priests; the stairs are drawn up after she has gone down, and a quantity of earth

is heaped up over the entrance to the cell, so as to prevent it from being distinguished from the rest of the mound. This is the punishment of those who break their vow of virginity. (Para 16)

Wildfang posits a two-fold reason why the punishment for the breaking of the vow was so horrific. While the religious significance of the Vestals to Rome's image of itself cannot be overstated (1), the insistence on virginity ensured that the privileges attached to the Vestals could not become associated with any single Roman family and was equally important (61). For the Romans, the denial of the free sexual will of these priestesses was a matter of both societal self-fashioning and serious financial, religious, and political importance. As this history becomes subject matter for the poetic and dramatic fictions of the Early Modern period, the threat is transferred into areas of importance to Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

There are many paths by which Plutarch's account could have reached the authors of the Elizabethan age, but the surest for the widest range of authors was via Ovid. While nearly all of Ovid's works were widely known, as he formed part of the backbone of a basic education, his *Metamorphoses* (in the translation of Arthur Golding in 1567) and *Amores* were wildly popular among the generation of poets coming of age in the 1580s and 1590s, attested to by the sheer number of imitations and translations. It is in Book 4 of the *Metamorphoses* that Ovid makes his most direct reference to the fate of the Vestal Virgins in the tale of Leucothoe, a young woman with whom the Sun falls in love. After the Sun has had his way with her (seemingly against her will in Golding, more ambiguously in the original), one of Leucothoe's rivals makes sure that the affair is known to all. In shame, Leucothoe's father,

cruell and unmercifull would no excuse accept,
But holding up hir handes to heaven when tenderly she wept,
And said it was the Sunne that did the deede against hir will:
Yet like a savage beast full bent his daughter for to spill,
He put hir deepe in delved ground, and on hir bodie laide
A huge great heape of heavie sand. (92)

That Shakespeare knew this passage there is little doubt; the story of Leucothoe follows immediately upon the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe, which he would use to great comic effect at the conclusion of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Ovidian tales of erotic love were such the rage in the 1580s and 1590s that they spawned the genre of the epyllion, or 'little epic.' While the term "epyllion" has been a bit slippery throughout literary history, "in Renaissance poetry they tended to be a kind of erotic treatment of a mythological narrative. For example, Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, Thomas Lodge's *Scillaes Metamorphosis*, and Francis Beaumont's *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*" ("Epyllion" 248-9). While today they are mostly encountered, if at all, in upper-division English courses, they were among the most popular texts of the time, often printed rather than circulated in manuscript due to their length. The literary quality is undeniable, but it would be hopelessly naive to overlook the more prurient interest some of the original audience would have taken in these poems. Perhaps in contrast with similarly titillating material today, "much erotic verse of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, on the other hand, acknowledges—even obsesses over—autonomous female sexuality" (15), according to Ian Moulton, to whom we shall return shortly. The most famous epyllion today by far is Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, left unfinished at his death in 1593 and later completed by

George Chapman. It is in Marlowe's poem and Chapman's continuation that we find the most conspicuous reference to the fate of the Vestal Virgins in Early Modern literature, and the first instance of the major shift in meaning that it will take in response to the sexual standards of the time.

Marlowe first introduces us to Hero, a beautiful young priestess of Venus who has somewhat paradoxically sworn a vow of chastity. Like the Vestals, her sexual prime is not her own to dispose of as she chooses. Perhaps due to the fact that Marlowe's version of the poem hadn't progressed much beyond Hero and Leander's first sexual encounter at the time of his death, he doesn't have a great deal to say about the consequences of Hero breaking her vow; however, George Chapman, in his continuation of Marlowe's poem, dedicates the entirety of the fourth sestiad to Hero's fruitless attempts to atone for becoming, in Chapman's term, 'devirginate.' Tantalizingly, Chapman even names the Swan that speaks to comfort Hero Leucote, and her comfort is ultimately revealed to be as cold as her namesake's tomb. The breaking of Hero's vow has disgraced Venus, who has thereby lost a bet with Diana that even a single devotee of Venus could live chastely. While this sets in motion a series of events that will end with the drowning of Leander, followed by Hero casting herself into the sea, Marlowe's version of the poem emphasizes Leander as the surrogate who will die for Hero's choice.

He does so through a curious segment of the poem that occurs the first time Leander swims the Hellespont to visit Hero at night. During this swim, Neptune is overcome with desire for Leander, and nearly drowns him in the process of trying to possess him sexually. Neptune's attempts paint Leander as distinctly female: "He clapt his plump cheekes, with his tresses playd" (2.181), to the point that Leander cries out "You are deceav'd, I am no woman I" (2.1.191). Neptune's response makes clear that he is not interested in Leander as a man, but as an effeminate boy, telling him a story of the seduction of a young boy by a shepherd. In any event, Leander escapes, talks Hero out of her vow of chastity, and is preparing to swim home as Marlowe's poem ends. This raises two questions: why does Marlowe figure Leander as feminine in the scene? And why will the first punishment for Hero's broken vow of chastity fall upon him?

We can answer these questions by reference to both humoral theory and Early Modern fears about overt female sexuality and the emasculating effect it could have on a man. In the section of his work *Before Pornography: Erotic Writing in Early Modern England* dealing with epyllion, Moulton suggests that "Commonly accepted humoral theory posited that men were 'hotter' and 'drier' than women, whose bodies were relatively 'cold' and 'moist.' It is not surprising, given the patriarchal nature of early modern society, that men's hot, dry bodies were seen as superior to women's" (16). The danger arises from intemperate sexual desire, which, through the combination of humors, rarifies the female body while debasing the male. Female sexuality must be contained and turned to socially productive ends, such as the conception of children; allowed free rein, female sexual desire would render the man effeminate. As Moulton points out, effeminacy was often understood literally: "An effeminate man's body would be physically womanly: he would lose body hair, his muscles would soften, and he might become impotent" (16). From this point of view, Leander has been made effeminate, and Neptune's passion will render him ultimately cold and moist. Not only has Hero's sexual desire debased him; it has made him a surrogate for the punishment she would undergo for transgressing her vows. His live burial, in this sense, is the most womanly punishment he could undergo, forever trapped under the sea.

One more element connects Leander's drowning both to a sense of effeminacy and Roman religious punishments. As Wildfang notes, the live burial of the sexually

impure Vestal Virgin is of a piece with other punishments for those the Romans felt were religiously impure; they were a way for the punishers to shunt off direct responsibility for the death, allowing that ultimately the gods were the ones who imposed it. After all, the Vestal Virgin would die of starvation, not suffocation. While live burial was reserved for the Vestals, though, the other punishment decreed for the impure was indirect drowning: “hermaphrodites, for example, were sent out to sea” (58). Leander, then, is thoroughly enmeshed in a web of associations of sexual debasement and punishment traceable back to the Vestal Virgins.

While Juliet does not have the explicit religious connection to the Vestal Virgins that Hero does, her situation is the Early Modern secular equivalent. Her sexual choices are not allowed to be made for love or pleasure; they are rather to be dictated by the “public” (family, in this instance) good and overseen by a man wielding only slightly less power to punish than the *pontifex maximus* of the Vestals.

Juliet’s sexuality, including her virginity, is certainly not prized in and of itself; her father is only slightly hesitant to bargain it away, despite his initial reservations about her age. The connotation is clear; Juliet’s virginity is not hers to dispose of as she chooses, but is held in trust for the public good of her family and its betterment. The conflict arises because Juliet, like Hero, is devoted to something other than what she has been marked out for: love, in its romantic, erotic, and spiritual dimensions. The Nurse, uselessly pragmatic as she is, points out this distinction between the sexual marketplace for which Juliet is meant and the love Juliet desires, when she advises Juliet after Romeo’s banishment: “since the case so stands as now it doth, / I think it best you married with the County. / O, he’s a lovely gentleman!” (3.5.217-9). After all, the matter in the play for which Juliet and Romeo will ultimately pay for with their lives is not premarital sex; they are duly, if perhaps irresponsibly, married by Friar Laurence. Nor do I feel the issue is even necessarily a marriage between a Capulet and a Montague; their deaths seem to bring about the end of the feud easily enough. The real issue seems to be that their marriage is strictly a lateral move for the Capulets; the two families are ‘both alike in dignity,’ after all. However, the marriage to Paris would have been a step up for her family, and her sexual agency must be diverted away from private desire and towards the public good. That Juliet was far from unique in this does not lessen the parallels towards the Vestal Virgins of Rome; while many other women may have taken Juliet’s path, none of them were specifically buried alive in a famous play as a direct result.

That Romeo shares her fate is not surprising, given what we know of Leander’s surrogate burial in Hero’s stead. Romeo has also been shown as emasculated throughout the play by his propensity towards love rather than honor or war, beginning with his absence from the violent encounter which begins the play. When Benvolio later finds him, he is enveloped in a lover’s melancholy and complains of an estrangement from himself: “I have lost myself. I am not here. / This is not Romeo, he’s some otherwhere” (1.1.195-6). Even Friar Laurence notes how emasculated Romeo has become, upbraiding him specifically in the language of gender norms:

Art thou a man? Thy form cries out thou art.
Thy tears are womanish, thy wild acts denote
The unreasonable fury of a beast.
Unseemly woman in a seeming man,
And ill-beseeming beast in seeming both! (3.3.108-112)

Although Romeo has been living an epyllion rather than spending his time reading them, the end result is the same. Like Juliet, he walks into his place of burial a living being, never to walk out again.

All of the young lovers in the texts we have examined here suffer for the exercise of female sexual will, whether contrary to a vow or to the needs of a *pater familias*. The young men are shown to be made effeminate by joining themselves to that will, and ultimately die as a result; the young women are left to take their own lives, all other agency stripped from them. While no longer bodily thrust alive into the tomb by a high priest or angry father, the transference of the power over these women's sexual agency to the sexual standards of Early Modern England dooms them to an early burial just the same. The fate of a Vestal Virgin remains a potent allusion and symbolic shorthand for poets and audiences over 1500 years later.

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Missing Queequeg: “I Have Not Told Half [I] Suffered”¹

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*Through ritual, our grief becomes entwined in love.
Grief is a wound, but it's also an opportunity.
As the thirteenth-century poet Rumi says,
'The wound is the place where the light enters you.'
—Elaine Mansfield, “Good Grief! What I Learned from Loss.”*

1. Grief and Narrative Distancing

Of the many avenues worth exploration in one of the greatest American works of literature, a poignant one is the question of Queequeg. In a country so firmly steeped in Eurocentric Puritan heritage, Queequeg's importance in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* is his exemplification of the highest Christian principles—brotherhood, fidelity, communion, and sacrifice. The heathen harpooner quickly enchants the narrator Ishmael, and their transformative relationship unveils the human condition in its most elevated forms. Yet the final chapters barely mention Queequeg, whom I would call the best man in the whole book. For all the chapters on whale skulls and blubber, loose and fast fish, and the vivid description of squeezing spermaceti, what could be the purpose of the pointed absence of a relationship that so greatly embodies Melville's themes of community and companionship?

My hope is to explain Queequeg's diminished role in *Moby-Dick*'s final chapters. I dare not label it a failing of the author, nor does the novel's shift to focus on Starbuck and Ahab's relationship completely fill this evident lacuna satisfactorily. Rather, the explanation that best honors Queequeg as a crucially significant character and that validates the narrator's development from angry, suicidal runaway to a man fit for meaningful social bonding is the most deeply human: grief. Queequeg's influence establishes a deep spiritual bond, the loss of which moves Ishmael to mourn in the only ways he can. Various distancing techniques show how his impulse to mourn is repressed in a setting where he cannot easily follow nineteenth-century grieving customs, even at the height of the Victorian cult of mourning. With his seafaring tale, Ishmael commemorates his relationship with Queequeg, the transformational effects of which act as a buoy, guiding him into a life ready for traditional social and familial commitments.

2. The Cult of Mourning

To understand the strangeness of Ishmael's reticence in discussing Queequeg in the later part of the novel, one must be familiar with bereavement culture around the time Melville wrote *Moby-Dick*. The mid- to late-nineteenth century was the height

of the so-called cult of mourning. Karin J. Bohleke explores photographs from the 1850s and 1860s that demonstrate the social pressures to mourn using ritualized etiquette. Style guides defined and redefined the stages, length, and rituals of bereavement for both women and men. Bohleke maintains that these culturally enforced traditions were valuable in that they allowed people to come to terms with the different psychological stages of grief: "More than anything, nineteenth-century mourners realized that grief requires time, and they generously allowed that time" (190). Ishmael does not follow conventional Victorian mourning etiquette, but I would argue that, as he pens his maritime story of the *Pequod*, one can find evidence of his grieving.

One notable aspect of Victorian bereavement culture is that it isolated those grieving. Bohleke explains that widows "were forbidden to partake in any social function and allowed out of the house only to attend church services and visit close relations"; in a sense, widows were "social outcasts for the first year and one day of deep mourning" (169). In *Moby-Dick*, Ishmael is similarly isolated. Named for a Biblical outcast, Ishmael's trajectory begins when he is a young man dissatisfied with his life and ready to step "into the street, and methodically [knock] people's hats off" or to kill himself with "pistol and ball" (Melville 18). His melancholy and irritability drive him to the sea, in hopes that a sailor's life will bring him relief. But Ishmael's choice to alienate himself from the society he knows conflicts with an unconscious need for community.

After meeting Queequeg in the Spouter Inn, the misanthropic Ishmael comes to admire the harpooner for his generous, loving, and serene nature, and humorously describes him as "George Washington cannibalistically developed" (Melville 55). Soon, Ishmael finds himself powerless to reject Queequeg's sincere pledge of devotion. Queequeg and Ishmael are "married" as "bosom friends," "in our hearts' honeymoon, . . . a cosy, loving pair" (Melville 56-7). As a kind of spirit guide archetype, Queequeg initiates Ishmael's evolving understanding of and desire for community and kinship.

Unfortunately, the story ends with Ishmael alone again, cast out from the vortex that took his self-selected family. Ishmael's status as an orphan is founded on the loss of his spiritual partner, the community he has come to embrace, and the whaler's life that he chose for himself. As the *Rachel* approaches to rescue Ishmael, the reader is left to question whether he will isolate himself again or if the lessons he learned aboard the *Pequod* will travel with him. I suggest that they do, in the form of his tale woven with threads of both transcendent spiritual awakening and subtle expressions of profound grief. Ishmael's need to grieve can be traced through *Moby-Dick* in the narrative choices he makes to commemorate the death of his closest friend, and these choices show Ishmael's attempt to quantify the spiritual evolution that Queequeg initiates.

3. "Gulp Down Your Tears"

Before *Moby-Dick*'s celebrated opening, we meet the narrator in the "Etymology" and "Extracts" sections. Even in this prefacing material, hints of Ishmael's grief appear. As the narrator acknowledges an assistant (or "sub-sub") librarian who compiled the many whale allusions, he toasts a sarcastic "fare thee well, poor devil of a Sub-Sub" (Melville 8). But the narrator's tone moves from irony to shades of sympathy: "But gulp down your tears and hie aloft to the royal-mast with your hearts; for your friends who have gone before are clearing out the seven-storied heavens" (Melville 8). Here, in admonishing all unappreciated sub-subs to hold back their tears, the narrator strives to suppress his own grief for loved ones lost, and before chapter one even begins, Melville establishes grieving as so

essential to Ishmael's story that it must weave itself through even the preface material, where "here ye strike but splintered hearts together" (8). Later, we find out, a mere 15% of the way through the novel, that it is Ishmael's beloved harpooner friend for whom he mourns, Queequeg whom Ishmael is devoted to until "poor Queequeg took his last long dive" (Melville 64).

4. "I Have Not Told Half [I] Suffered"

Analyzing repressed grief in written texts is difficult because of its subtlety, but history affords us plenty of examples. There are correlations to Ishmael's stifled mourning in the journals of women bound West in the early- to mid-nineteenth century. Carey Voeller examined the journals of women traveling the Overland Trail and found that the "tendency of these writers to suppress and minimize grief thus results in another ritualized, generic form of textual mourning" (152). For journeys like this, marked by extreme hardship, he observed that travelers in unstable, deadly conditions use omission, minimizing, and suppression to shift the focus away from overt expressions of grief. One of the diaries Voeller studied belonged to Elizabeth Dixon Smith, who traveled from Indiana to Oregon with her family in 1847. Most of her diary is a mundane log of miles traveled, weather conditions, what parts of the wagon broke, and so on, but after her husband sickens, she reveals a whisper of explicit emotion. Voeller states:

[S]he closes this entry, 'I have not told half we suffered. I am inadequate [sic] to the task . . .' She hints that much more hardship has occurred than she admits in the text, but her inadequacy proves a rhetorical tool that ultimately . . . mutes the hardship and allows Smith and her narrative to continue moving—through what remains unsaid. (153)

Smith's avoidance of grief is reminiscent of Ishmael's, but these migratory mourners use another tactic as well: distraction. The women journaling their harsh experiences on the Overland Trail "treat death briefly and momentarily, and their loss and mourning rarely serve as focal points in their narratives . . . [r]ather, writers distract their audiences (and most likely themselves) by providing a whirlwind of other information" (Voeller 150). If one looks at the scope of Ishmael's tale, it is clear that he augments his story with a mountain of data, discursions, and digressions in an effort to make sense of his place in the world and the nearly unfathomable nature of life and death. In *Moby-Dick's* cetology chapters about blubber, brit, pitchpoling, quadrants, and ambergris, Melville evokes a rhythm—similar to what Voeller found in the Overland Trail journals, "a cadence of repetition" (155)—that distracts both Ishmael and the reader and lulls us away from something important. It is the discussion of death that Ishmael skirts, a very personal death that he most struggles to minimize.

It is interesting to note that, of the Overland Trail journals Voeller studied, many were written after the journey, when the authors' environmental conditions were less perilous. Similar to Smith's real-world journal, Ishmael's minimalist account of his mourning is written after the fact of his trauma, "the full gravity of which cannot be expressed, [and] must be swallowed up by the ocean of novelistic and societal propriety" (Greven 45). Though Melville sets his narrator's writing of his story years after the events that caused his loss, we get a sense of the scope of Ishmael's grief by examining the omissions, distractions, and narrative distancing woven throughout *Moby-Dick*.

5. "What Untattooed Parts Might Remain"

Another subtle marker of Ishmael's grief is his tattoos. In "Body Art: Sacred and Secular Text in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*," John Norton unravels the layered meanings woven in the tattoos of Ishmael and Queequeg. In these body texts, Norton reads both a catalog of trauma and Ishmael's effort to reconcile it; a reminder of a journey that is physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual; and a desire to unfold and comprehend a numinous mystery. Ishmael spends much time discussing Queequeg's extensive tattoos, given to him by a revered tribal prophet, which detail "a complete theory of the heavens and the earth, and a mystical treatise on the art of attaining truth" (Melville 366), and his reverence for these mystical truths is highlighted when he spends hours carving his coffin lid with the patterns of these tattoos.

One short paragraph in chapter 102, however, points to Ishmael's own use of tattoos as an external expression of grief. In "A Bower in the Arsacides," Ishmael recounts the story of his stay with the king of Tranque, during which time he closely examined the skeleton of a sperm whale preserved in a temple served by venerating priests. As he prepares to share with the reader what Norton terms the "sacred mystery" of the skeletal dimensions he observed (2), Ishmael confesses that they are "copied verbatim from my right arm, where I had them tattooed" (Melville 346). Throughout the novel, Ishmael wrestles with the scope and magnitude of a whale's physical proportions and philosophical meanings, so the significance of tattooing the whale's dimensions is more than mere body art: Ishmael inks onto his body his search for meaning.

Even though the priests object to him taking these measurements—"Dar'st thou measure this our god!" (Melville 346)—the whale tattoo may be a less significant one than is his plan for a future tattoo. Ishmael says, "I was crowded for space, and wished the other parts of my body to remain a blank page for a poem I was then composing—at least, what untattooed parts might remain" (Melville 346-47). If Ishmael's skin is "crowded for space," he is almost fully tattooed, like Queequeg. But he plans to fill his remaining blank skin with a poem, a literary expression of the ineffable. Could it be that the poem he is composing to fill his empty spaces is another search for meaning—a representation of his spiritual journey with Queequeg? Both Ishmael and Queequeg are marked by their own truths, and the truths revealed by their catalytic relationship are "a riddle to unfold; a wondrous work in one volume" (Melville 367). Queequeg makes no claim to understand the markings put on his body by his tribe's seer prophet, and he is perfectly content that "these mysteries were therefore destined in the end to moulder away with the living parchment" (Melville 367). In contrast, Ishmael seems less at ease that the mysteries of ultimate truth "be unsolved to the last" (Melville 367). Since he already marked himself with dimensions that try to define and delimit the sperm whale, Ishmael's planned tattoos can be read as an attempt to represent his entangled trauma and wonder in a memorial to the man who is the catalyst for Ishmael's discovering the redemptive power of fellowship. Marking his skin this way would allow Ishmael to wear the text of his grief openly, a part of his very self, and making this admission hints that he wants to do so, yet with no evidence that his planned poem is ever inked into his flesh (and without even an admission that the poem would be about Queequeg), Ishmael's grief remains hidden and repressed.

6. "I Clove Like a Barnacle"

What is troubling about Queequeg, if he is the protagonist's closest companion, is that he seems to disappear after chapter 110. Why would the novel's best model of masculinity on the ship—brave, compassionate, calm, selfless, hardworking—go

missing from the final twenty chapters, without even a word in acknowledgement as the final vortex “carried the smallest chip of the *Pequod* out of sight” (Melville 426)? To answer that, I turn to the last scene in which he plays a major role, “Queequeg in his Coffin.” Here Starbuck finally convinces Ahab that they must stop the ship and repair the oil casks that have begun leaking in the hold. Ishmael quickly becomes concerned because Queequeg, after toiling in the dark, cold hold, catches a “terrible chill which lapsed into a fever” (Melville 363).

Consider Ishmael’s language in this chapter. When introducing Queequeg’s role in this anecdote, Ishmael calls him “my poor pagan companion,” “fast bosom-friend,” and “poor Queequeg!” (Melville 363). Ishmael lays claim to Queequeg with the possessive *my*. Additionally, this intimate and loving language echoes chapter 10, where Ishmael details the early blooming of their friendship: “that henceforth we were married; meaning, in his country’s phrase, that we were bosom friends; he would gladly die for me, if need should be” (Melville 56). In chapter 110, Ishmael quickly re-establishes that close bond, as close as the one that held them fast to one another in chapter 72, “The Monkey Rope”: “so that for better or for worse, we two, for the time, were wedded . . . an elongated Siamese ligature united us. Queequeg was my own inseparable twin brother” (Melville 255). This language of close connection, however, soon begins to change.

In chapter 110, Melville makes significant shifts in the way characters speak about each other and themselves, especially in the usage of pronouns. What is strange about this chapter is the manner in which Ishmael’s language begins to strip his place entirely from the scene. He starts the chapter clearly admitting his emotional and literal closeness to Queequeg, the connection that throughout the story he says that he will not abandon, as when he declares in chapter 13, “I clove to Queequeg like a barnacle; yea, till poor Queequeg took his last long dive” (Melville 64). But this possessive, intimate language changes as Queequeg’s health worsens. As the days pass, Queequeg wastes away, “till there seemed but little left of him but his frame and tattooing” (Melville 364), and surely his boon companion would attend his bedside. But Ishmael’s language places the reader there, rather than admit his own place at all: “An awe that cannot be named would steal over *you* as *you* sat by the side of this waning savage” (Melville 364, emphasis added). Certainly, Ishmael’s narrative choice creates deep pathos in his audience, but it is also driven by his unwillingness or inability to re-experience and express his grief more overtly. Ishmael, in recounting Queequeg’s deadly illness, cannot place himself in the scene so near the potential loss of his soul brother.

This distancing continues, yet Ishmael is compelled to soften it with loving paeans:

“Let us say it again—no dying Chaldee or Greek had higher and holier thoughts than those, whose mysterious shades you saw creeping over the face of poor Queequeg, . . . the rolling sea seemed gently rocking him to his final rest, and the ocean’s invisible flood-tide lifted him higher and higher towards his destined heaven.” (Melville 364)

Ishmael’s forced narrative detachment nearly substitutes hypothetical foreigners, “Chaldee or Greek,” in the place of his friend, but Ishmael still cannot hold back his devotion to Queequeg. Here Ishmael’s language—the “higher and holier thoughts” and “destined heaven”—honors Queequeg’s spiritual nature that has awakened Ishmael so forcefully throughout the novel. Earlier, in chapter 72, as Ishmael is connected by the monkey-rope to Queequeg, he recognizes that he is likewise connected to the brotherhood of humanity and “every mortal that breathes . . . has this Siamese

connexion with a plurality of other mortals” (Melville 255). Then, in “The Grand Armada,” Ishmael’s boat is drawn to the calm center of a raging vortex of whales, where at the side of Queequeg, “amid the tornadoed Atlantic of my being, do I myself still for ever centrally disport in mute calm; and while ponderous planets of unwaning woe revolve round me, deep down and deep inland there I still bathe me in eternal mildness of joy” (Melville 303). In the midst of chaos and danger, Queequeg brings Ishmael peace, joy, and connection, and as his spiritual guide, allows Ishmael to be privy to “[s]ome of the subtlest secrets of the seas . . . divulged to us in this enchanted pond” (Melville 303).

But Queequeg’s illness worsens, and the whole crew believes he will die. Ishmael recounts that Queequeg “called *one* to him . . . taking *his* hand” (Melville 364, emphasis added). Ishmael’s distancing is even more distinctive here, forcing the audience to fill in the gaps and omissions. He no longer uses second person point of view, and yet cannot place himself in the scene with even a pronoun. This unnamed *one* can really only be Ishmael, who as closest companion would seek to stay near Queequeg to provide aid and comfort. The fading Queequeg shares a dying wish with Ishmael, one that likely recalls an earlier time, perhaps the days they spent at the Try Pots Hotel just before they boarded the *Pequod*: “while in Nantucket he had chanced to see certain little canoes of dark wood, . . . and upon inquiry, he had learned that all whalemens who died in Nantucket, were laid in those same dark canoes” (Melville 364). Rather than be buried in his hammock and tossed to the sharks, Queequeg wishes to be buried in one of those coffin-canoes, which are similar to a whale boat and reminiscent of burial customs of his own people, “who, after embalming a dead warrior, stretched him out in his canoe, and so left him to be floated away to the starry archipelagoes” (Melville 364). By calling up an event from their shared past but avoiding naming himself within the memory, Ishmael is again placing yet displacing himself in the scene. His language moves intimately closer, metaphorically linking Queequeg to a slain hero floating off to the “blue heavens,” and then pulls away (Melville 364). It is obviously Ishmael who communicates Queequeg’s wishes for a coffin, but he will only admit that “when this strange circumstance *was made known* aft, the carpenter *was at once commanded* to do Queequeg’s bidding, whatever it might include” (Melville 364, emphasis added). Like the use of pronouns to create a sense of detachment, the passive verbs “was made known” and “was commanded” and the description that “from these dark planks the coffin *was recommended* to be made” (Melville 365, emphasis added) create a greater space between Ishmael and this scene, distancing him from even voicing the possibility of loss. His reluctance to reveal his own presence and agency contradicts his desperate tone which betrays a sense of urgency—“whatever it might include”—especially as Queequeg’s death grows nearer and nearer (Melville 364).

Ishmael continues to make similar linguistic and narrative choices, erasing himself even further as *someone* answers Queequeg’s demands for his harpoon and *someone* lifts Queequeg into the coffin-canoes. Queequeg tells “*one* to go to his bag and bring out his little god, Yojo” (Melville 365, emphasis added). Two characters do make an appearance: Pip (a young low-ranking sailor) holds Queequeg’s hand momentarily while he chants and rattles a tambourine, and Starbuck (the first mate) speaks from above, “gazing down the scuttle” (Melville 366). But Ishmael employs no narrative distancing for these characters; they appear on scene, play a small part, and exit, leaving that Indefinite Ishmael (the unnamed *someone* who must be Ishmael) hiding in plain sight.

Once Queequeg decides that he is satisfied with these preparations for death, he begins to improve. One last pronoun expresses distance—“*Some* expressed their delighted surprise”—but within a paragraph, Ishmael calls him again “*my* Queequeg”

(Melville 366, emphasis added). This linguistic shift back to a first-person possessive pronoun occurs only when Ishmael no longer has to admit the immediate possibility of Queequeg's death. Yes, Ishmael mentions, as early as chapter 13 before they even reach Nantucket, that Queequeg dies, but the closer he gets to that event, the less he can give voice to his grief.

After Queequeg's practice-run funeral, he is mentioned a handful of times and only casually. When the ship finally sinks down into an implacable vortex, dragging all the remaining crew down to their deaths, Ishmael does not mention Queequeg at all. Unable to name his searing grief, his alternative form of mourning—one marked by omission, distraction, and repression—represents what David Greven describes as a "self-defining sense of pervasive loss coupled with a refusal to recognize that loss" (37). Psychologically, his suppression is an act of self-preservation from a consuming despair. Since he sees himself in a spiritual union with Queequeg, in which he "perceives that [his] own individuality was now merged in a joint stock company of two" (Melville 255), the loss of Queequeg could rob him of an important part of himself.

7. "Let Us Squeeze Hands All Round"

Ishmael begins as a social outcast, a runaway hoping to avoid the despair that would lead to suicide, but his desire to alienate himself from his old life actually leads him to communion and fellowship with a new life. Linda Cahir explains that characters like Ishmael "understand that their deep propensity to solitude, privacy, and self-reliance occurs in simultaneity with their equally deep need to be understood, to understand another, and to be integrated into a meaningful bond of fellowship" (2). Queequeg's relationship with Ishmael is so compelling because of the hope it offers us: "In a life so permeated with loneliness, there are rich instances of communion with another" (Cahir 89-90). If a grump like Ishmael can learn to love and appreciate his fellow man, surely, we all can.

Throughout the novel, Ishmael is compelled to eulogize Queequeg, and his greatest memorials are the moments when he speaks the most freely and fervently, resounding fully in "A Squeeze of the Hand." Ishmael and his crewmates squeeze the solidifying spermaceti back into liquid form, in what begins as comic enthusiasm: "Squeeze! squeeze! squeeze! all the morning long; I squeezed that sperm till I myself almost melted into it" (Melville 322). However, the sincerity with which Ishmael praises this liquescent ceremony elevates the moment to one of near divinity: "I felt divinely free from all ill-will, or petulance, or malice, of any sort whatsoever" (Melville 322). This hallowed, mystical experience mesmerizes and transforms him, drawing him ineluctably toward his community of brothers in a spiritual consummation:

"I found myself unwittingly squeezing my co-laborers' hands in it, mistaking their hands for the gentle globules. Such an abounding, affectionate, friendly, loving feeling did this avocation beget; that at last I was continually squeezing their hands, and looking up into their eyes sentimentally; as much as to say, —Oh! my dear fellow beings, . . . Come; let us squeeze hands all round; nay, let us all squeeze ourselves into each other; let us squeeze ourselves universally into the very milk and sperm of kindness." (Melville 323)

Even his understanding of true happiness changes. "Attainable felicity" is no longer an abstraction, one withheld from the depressed young Ishmael on Manhattan Island; for the older Narrator Ishmael, scarred by trauma and saved by love, happiness exists in the concretely physical, "in the wife, the heart, the bed, the table, the saddle, the fire-side, the country" (Melville 323), physicality that can really only

be found in connection and kinship with others. David Greven explains that Ishmael's tale becomes "a freely . . . homosocial space of cooperation and care" in which "this utopian vision of communal, mutually comforting male bonds shimmers like an oasis in a sea of despair" (49). This transformation could only have happened through Ishmael's profound relationship with the nurturing Queequeg.

When the ship's old, rotted life-buoy sinks into the sea, Queequeg offers his coffin-canoe to be caulked closed as replacement. Coffins have special significance and bookend Ishmael and Queequeg's relationship: the landlord Peter Coffin introduces them, and Queequeg's empty coffin acts as "an immortality-preserver" (Melville 396) that saves Ishmael when the *Pequod* is fatally damaged by the enraged White Whale. The site of a vicious, mortal battle between whale and man just moments before, the ocean now takes on the peaceful tranquility of heaven at the appearance of Queequeg's coffin; Queequeg's devotion to Ishmael works a similarly divine effect. In preserving the narrator, the life-buoy allows Ishmael to immortalize Queequeg's redeeming influence.

8. "Call Me Ishmael"

In the end, his *Pequod* family is lost, and Ishmael is alone, an "orphan" (Melville 427). Like another Biblical character, Job, Ishmael's faith is tested, but with Queequeg, that faith is restored. As Ishmael reflects on sharing a bed and a smoke with the friendly neighborhood cannibal and squeezing the spermaceti of human kindness with a fraternity of whalers, Cahir suggests that he comes to realize that, "in a universe as implacable and inscrutable as the white whale itself, . . . the moments of meaningful contact we make with other people provide joy and significance in our lives" (93). When the *Rachel* finally rescues him, Ishmael is a "fast-fish," tethered fast to Queequeg's memory as if by a whale rope—but he is also a "loose-fish" (Melville 308), one free and available to new bonds because his relationship with Queequeg taught him the value of connection and prepared him for commitment to a new community. Ishmael's transformation and subsequent salvation by the *Rachel* signal his possible readiness to enter traditional society. It is worth noting that the ship that rescues him has a woman's name, perhaps to hint at more conventional Victorian ideals of heterosexual family bonds.

Much of the novel is driven by Ishmael's growing recognition that human connection has the potential to spiritually elevate us. As Ishmael recounts the relationship that blooms with Queequeg and struggles to communicate the profound grief he must relive as he approaches the retelling of Queequeg's death, he shares with the reader all the deeply moral and spiritual questions and answers that he found through this intense homosocial bond. The sole survivor of the *Pequod* disaster, Ishmael holds these lessons just as tightly as he ultimately holds the life-buoy of Queequeg's empty coffin. We can find evidence of his transformation in the famous first line of chapter one: "Call me Ishmael" (Melville 18). The grieving former misanthrope invites us to connect.

Notes

¹ Citation from Voeller 153

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Richardson's *Pamela* Models How Shakespeare Can Inspire Creativity for Women Writers

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"Richardson used his correspondence to promote the respectable status of women as writers and to encourage them to write both commercially and informally."

—Louise Curran

Scholars writing about Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* no longer focus on the treatment in Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* of "its formal unity and its peculiar combination of moral purity and impurity" ("Love and the Novel" 42). Scholars now supply contextual commentary—the social, material, and literary contexts for discussions of Richardson's fiction. The emphasis is on cultural discourse in the eighteenth century.

To fit this shift in emphasis,¹ I will replace not only the Watt-inspired reading of *Pamela* as a character relentlessly protecting her virginity to gain a husband from a wealthier class, but also John Zang's 1991 deconstructionist reading. My new reading of *Pamela* as Richardson's encouragement for women to write, whether informally or to create a potential novel, will bring details from Richardson's cultural context and the focus of his female audience to the forefront. Because *Pamela*'s letters frequently refer to her paper, pen and ink, I will focus on the impact of these tools used in the letter writing of the Shakespeare Ladies Club, founded in 1736, which initiated new eighteenth-century literary discourse.

As noted by Curran in *Samuel Richardson and the Art of Letter Writing*, Richardson was part of a culture "in which quotations were routinely classified to register affective reading and display patterns of knowledge" (161). Therefore, Richardson borrowed quotations from theatre and drama, a very popular genre during the eighteenth century, as well as poetry, fables and fairy tales, and humor books and perhaps Edward Bysshe's *Art of English Poetry*, initially printed in 1702 with frequent reprints in following years. Recent scholar Stephen Jarrod Bernard claims Bysshe's alphabetical headings for his listing of quotations from famous writers "sound the 'moral and social expectations'—and the aesthetic—of his day" (118). Abigail Williams also indicates that thought-provoking quotations enriched parlor room conversations in Richardson's day. However, as Kate L. Rumbold explains, when characters quote from Shakespeare, "what is most significant is not the original context of the borrowed words, but the act of quotation itself" (7). As I will show later when analyzing *Pamela*, Richardson incorporates this appreciation of the act of quotation itself in scenes such as that in which Mr. B compliments *Pamela* for being well-read when she rebuffs his unwanted advances with details from Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece*.

Richardson's character Pamela highlights that aspiring female writers must gain inspiration from their most revered dramatic writer, Shakespeare. In *The Social Life of Books: Reading Together in the Eighteenth Century Home*, Williams indicates that Richardson's *Pamela* was published in the wake of the Shakespeare Ladies Club's letter-writing campaign, initiated three years earlier in 1736 to convince the major theaters in London to bring moral Shakespeare to the stage to replace immoral Restoration Comedies and frivolous Italian operas.² In *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769*, Michael Dobson even details the focus of the letter-writing campaign by the Shakespeare Ladies Club with a quotation from their writing: "And once again let Shakespear [sic] bless the Stage; / Soul-Soothing Shade, rouz'd [sic] by a Woman's Pen, / To Check the impious Rage of lawless Men" (152). Theatre records show that by 28 February 1737, the Shakespeare Ladies Club's efforts resulted in a command performance of *Hamlet* at Drury Lane. Just days later on 3 March 1737, the *Grub Street Journal*, known for its satire on popular journalism and hack writing, supported the Shakespeare Ladies Club campaign by including a letter purported to be by Shakespeare, Jonson, Dryden, and Rowe addressed to "all judicious Frequenters of the Theatres" in which the ghosts of the four dramatists, acknowledge "Tis a great pleasure for us to hear, that the Ladies begin to encourage Common Sense; which makes us have hopes that the Gentlemen will follow their example" (Avery 155). The powerful effects of the Shakespeare Ladies Club's focus on the works of Shakespeare is evident in theatre records, which show that by the 1740-41 season, the year *Pamela* was published, more than 25% of productions in London theatres were works by Shakespeare. However, in my analysis of *Pamela* which comes later, I will show that Richardson's heroine Pamela renews Dryden's Restoration era practice of borrowing from and then revamping features from Shakespeare's works to reflect current issues.

Recognizing the success of the epistolary campaign waged by the Shakespeare Ladies Club, first to persuade theatre managers to bring Shakespeare to their stages and most recently to give a benefit performance of *Hamlet* to support efforts to place Shakespeare's statue in the corner of Westminster Abbey, Richardson constructs his novel *Pamela* (1741) as a series of letters written by a young woman. As I will show later when analyzing *Pamela*, Richardson incorporates numerous details from *Hamlet* made popular by that benefit performance. However, his Pamela re-contextualizes and revamps Shakespeare's details about Ophelia's death and about death the leveler from Hamlet's scene with Yorick's skull in his hand.

My evidence slightly modifies Rumbold's assertion in *Shakespeare and the Eighteenth-Century Novel* that "overt quotation of Shakespeare and other authors begins in earnest in the works of Samuel Richardson and is repeated, adapted, and adjusted in later texts" (6). In reading *Pamela*, I found no actual quotations from Shakespeare, although Richardson does adapt and adjust details from Shakespeare's poetry, comedies, and tragedies. By researching Richardson's overt quotations, such as those in the chapel scene in *Pamela*, I discovered the source for the twenty-third psalm as recited by Pamela's father to be William Whittingham's hymnary (331), and his Psalm 117 to be Thomas Norton's Laudate Dominum hymnal (332).

I will now turn to my evidence that Richardson's character Pamela is a portrait to show that a woman writer, especially one caught up in producing the fanfare for Shakespeare, ought to direct the power of her pen to composing her own story (i.e. writing and submitting a realistic novel for publication). Richardson initially portrays Pamela as being inspired by reading unnamed authors. In an interim narrative section of the novel, following LETTER XXXII, Mr. B, perhaps a shadow of Richardson, has one of the servants give Pamela access to his library. Pamela

then takes books from which she hopes “to receive improvement as well as amusement” (114) from her master’s library to her closet. Although Pamela tells her story as she knows it in her letters to her poor rural parents, she is aware that her male master Mr. B judges her writing to be “invention,” not literal truth. She overhears his male perspective: “The girl is always scribbling; I think she may be better employed” (15). “[I]f she stays here, . . . she will not write the affairs of my family purely for an exercise of her pen, and her invention” (23). Richardson’s Mr. B clarifies: “I could give you an instance, where she has talked a little too freely of the kindnesses that have been shewn her from a *certain quarter*,” (referring to himself, a male) and has imputed a “few kind words, uttered in compassion to her youth and circumstances, into a design upon her, and even dared to make free with names she ought never to mention” (22). Here Richardson’s Pamela, who believes her letter writing reports what naturally occurs in her everyday life, hears a conflicting male opinion about what constitutes credible realism. Women writers in Richardson’s day encounter this issue when dealing with male editors that control whose writing gets published.

Richardson’s Pamela then turns to another female, Mrs. Jervis, also a servant in Mr. B’s household, requesting her opinion. Mrs. Jervis coaches, “Well Pamela, you have made our master, from the sweetest tempered gentleman in the world, one of the most peevish. But you have it in your power to make him as sweet-tempered as ever; though I hope you’ll never do it on his terms” (44). Mrs. Jervis encourages Pamela, like any female writer, to maintain control of character change and development as her plot unfolds. Her advice also hints at the importance of ending each segment by leaving the reader in suspense curious to see what will happen next. In Richardson’s day, this was an essential for all novels because many were printed in magazines segment by segment as each issue came off the press. In contrast to following the advice to maintain control of her plot that Mrs. Jervis gives to Pamela, some authors of the popular serialized novels in Richardson’s day followed the advice of the readers for where they would like the plot to turn next.

Richardson’s Pamela also draws from the richness of the everyday reading and social life shared among the women Richardson encourages to write for publication, Richardson’s Pamela draws from the thought-provoking Shakespearean entertainment the Shakespeare Ladies Club had brought to theaters and drawing room conversation, which Pamela as Richardson portrays her could only know about through her reading. However, his Pamela needs only one Shakespearean poetic detail to set the stage for a scene in her story: Mr. B places a kiss on Pamela’s neck when they are alone in the garden house, a first step in the libertine behavior found in Restoration comedies and Italian operas which the efforts of the Shakespeare Ladies Club had greatly reduced on the stage. Then Mr. B’s concise dialogue “Whoever blamed *Lucretia*?” (26) needs no mention of Tarquin’s rape in Shakespeare’s poem to speak volumes about his intentions, to which Pamela responds by alluding to Shakespeare’s ending “May I, *Lucretia* like justify myself with my death, if I am used barbarously?” (26) to make clear that her dialogue is prompted by Shakespeare’s poem *The Rape of Lucrece*. Although Shakespeare’s Lucrece sends her servant for paper, ink and pen (line 1289) so she can inform her husband that Tarquin has abused her, Richardson’s Pamela eliminates the context of complex reasoning that leads Shakespeare’s Lucrece to commit suicide. Pamela plays to eighteenth-century respect for one’s ability to quote, as is evident in Mr. B’s response, “O my good girl! Tauntingly, you are well read . . . and we shall make out between us, before we have done a pretty story in romance” (26). When Pamela shares this garden house scene with Mrs. Jervis, she outlines the rest of Mr. B’s widely used and therefore predictable “romance” plot which she as a female writer

sees through and will avoid if possible when continuing her own story. Influenced by her reading from an earlier age, Pamela instead posits a moral turn for her story, "And I have read that many a man has been ashamed of his wicked attempts, when he has been repulsed, that would never have been ashamed of them, had he succeeded?" (37).

Richardson's Pamela also borrows from Shakespeare's tragedies. Thanks to the pens of the Shakespeare Ladies Club, the 1737 season at Drury Lane opened with a command performance of *Hamlet*, which continued to be popular. Therefore, Pamela, in her diary record of her passion at being held captive by Mr. B, transforms imagery surrounding Ophelia's drowning in Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet* to picture the results if she were to commit suicide at the pond. She poetically imagines, "when they see the dead corpse of the unhappy Pamela dragged out of those dewy banks, and lying breathless at their feet, they will find that remorse to soften their obdurate hearts . . . for the unfortunate Mr. Williams will . . . order me a decent funeral, and save me . . . from the dreadful highway interment" (181). Pamela replaces the shock expressed by Shakespeare's gravediggers that Ophelia will be given burial in the courtier's graveyard instead of outside the city as required for suicides with her own moment of eighteenth-century moral self-reflection which deters her: "this act of despondency is a sin, that, if I pursue it, admits no repentance" (182).

Richardson's Pamela even revamps the context for sack, a sweet fortified wine, and the trademark drink of Shakespeare's greatest comic character, Falstaff. In *Henry IV*, first revived through the efforts of the Shakespeare Ladies Club at Covent Garden 14 April 1737, Falstaff spends time drinking in the tavern and even carries sack with him on the way to the battlefield, resulting in his arriving too late to fight. Then in *Henry V*, first revived at Covent Garden 23 February 1738, Falstaff's friends report that he continued to cry out for sack as he lay dying. Servant girl Pamela, by contrast, reports the powers of sack as a household medical restorative. One day she writes that she worries that Mr. B is "very ill indeed," that he had been "upon the bed most part of the day" (267). Then as her story continues, she happily writes on the next day that Mr. B, "Having drank plentifully of sack whey, had sweated much; so that his fever had abated considerably" (267). Here Richardson's Pamela, child of religious conservative rural parents, innocently reveals class differences in perspective and response to Shakespearean theatre details. Thus, Richardson encourages women from any realm of society to write using details from their everyday lives.

Richardson's Pamela also combines allusions to frequently quoted passages from both Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies to communicate the resolution for her story: man-made class barriers become insignificant in the big scheme of things. Pamela highlights her theme by transforming Shakespeare's "All the world's a stage." In Shakespeare's comedy *As You Like It* (2.7.138) Jacques uses this line to introduce his seven ages of man monologue. After Mr. B confiscates Pamela's letters and detains her, Pamela paraphrases Shakespeare as she judges that class disparity barriers exist because "these proud people never think what a short stage life is" (271), perhaps hinting she wants her story to move toward the marriage and happy ending of the Shakespearean comedy. She reiterates the insignificance of class barriers by revising Hamlet's reflection (5.1.184-199) on Alexander the Great as he holds the skull of poor Yorick in his hand: in Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet* with "and true said the philosopher, when he looked upon the skull of a king, and that of a poor man, that he saw no difference between them" (271). To give her own story a marriage resolution as in Shakespeare's comedies, Pamela next uses Jacques' pattern of listing and describing what happens in each age of man as she pens Mr.

B's account of how his love of Pamela's writing has changed him. Now as an educated man, Mr. B explains the cause for the common disquiet in marriages. First nurses humor the child and thereby encourage rather than check insolence. Then at school, the child is rewarded for boisterous behavior. Next, the child tortures the parents with undutiful and perverse behavior towards them. Eventually, we marry for convenience, birth, or fortune with affection being the last if at all consulted (470-471). However, Pamela ends her story by having Mr. B show he has learned to love and respect her by providing a contract with 48 true partnership terms for their marriage. Because ability to quote was popular in Richardson's day, Richardson would dismiss as unlearned those who summarize Pamela's ending with "all for love," an echo of Dryden's title in his revision of Shakespeare's tragedy *Anthony and Cleopatra* (1667). Such judgments were obviously borrowed from Bysshe's *The Art of English Poetry*. As Bernard reports from Bysshe's preface, Bysshe composed his book of quotations, in each case followed by author's name, to promote "expression of judgments" (119). Bernard provides evidence that Bysshe is a fan of Dryden, crediting 1201 quotations to him compared to next highest source Pope with 155 quotations and Shakespeare 118 (122). However, Richardson's novel reflects that the Shakespeare Ladies Club had transformed the theatres to make Shakespeare the primary source for quotations that triggered thoughtful discussion and allusions in writing.

Richardson himself, the Master of the Stationers Company (the guild for the book trade), believed he had an important role in bringing women's writing into print. Because he had earlier composed and published a behavior guide for youth while learning a trade, *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum* (1734), and a government-commissioned collection of letters that "might serve as models for country readers," brought together with title *Familiar Letters* (1741), Richardson inserts in *Pamela* a mirror of his own role in teaching country women as his Pamela to write letters. Mr. B, master of the house in which Richardson's character Pamela, the letter writer, is employed, believes his exercises have helped Pamela refine her style, "I have a title to see the fruits of your pen" (242) and as co-writer: "I must assume to myself half the merit of your wit, too; for the innocent exercise you have had for it, from me, have certainly sharpened your invention" (243). That Richardson, Master of the Stationers Company, was presumptuous enough to include a master in his novel that takes credit for providing exercises that sharpen Pamela's writing seems a thinly veiled bow to his sense of the importance of his own *Familiar Letters*. That Pamela's letter writing skill wins her advancement from servant class to wife of her master also hints at the advancement that Richardson's guide for young apprentices promises.

Having observed the powerful changes in public theatre entertainment brought about by members of the Shakespeare Ladies Club taking pens in hand, Richardson sees reason to create a female character, Pamela, to model how women can use their pens to expand the arts by composing their own stories based on real life events. Richardson's Pamela emphasizes the importance of having access to writing by others. To create her own story, Pamela begins by setting up her conflict with a male in the more powerful position as master. As she writes, she shares details with other females in her own servant class, who reassure her that as writer she has control of character and plot line development. As Pamela expands her plot, she revamps key details from Shakespearean theater, the topic of the day in Richardson's London. Pamela's writing wins praise and love from her master Mr. B who makes a marriage contract giving her equal footing. But did Pamela's guide to features of her writing that were successful in the eyes of Mr. B serve Richardson's general desire to establish the respectable status of women as writers and encourage them to write

both commercially and informally? Not exactly. Women do not generally read a novel expecting to find pointers for how to write one. However, Richardson's *Pamela* did trigger at least one woman, Eliza Haywood, to quickly turn out a new novel.

Richardson's portrayal of the upward mobility of Pamela led to immediate controversy. Among the parodies that appeared shortly after *Pamela* was first issued is Eliza Haywood's *Anti-Pamela* (1741), which, ironically, was published by Richardson, in his role as Master of the Stationers' Company. Recently, Leslie Morrison claims that "like other critics of Richardson's novel, Haywood's *Anti-Pamela* depicts Pamela as a performer who manipulates the reader, as well as Mr. B, into seeing her as an appropriate match for a gentleman. For Morrison, the collapse of the distinction between the real social world of Richardson's day and that performed in the novel—in terms of both character and narration—is at the heart of the controversy surrounding *Pamela* (26). Although Richardson had written other "how to" books, the female readers of his *Pamela* did not immediately begin to create realistic novels with plots drawn from their own everyday conflicts expressed with lines and images from their reading or the playhouse culture that the Shakespeare Ladies Club letter writing campaign had achieved. As Williams notes:

It has often been said that what really marked Richardson's *Pamela* out from its fictional predecessors was the public respectability of its consumption, the 'Pamela Vogue.' . . . [Women] readers wanted to be seen with their new book. . . . Thanks to the burgeoning trade in themed merchandise, readers could flutter a *Pamela* fan, play a hand or two with *Pamela* cards, pour their friends tea in *Pamela* themed tea cups, display Joseph Highmore's *Pamela* prints on their walls, see the waxwork of their heroine in Shoe Lane, or dine at Vauxhall in the newly decorated *Pamela* pavilions. (225-6)

If Richardson did set out to encourage women to write, taking advantage of the success of the Shakespeare Ladies Club, he certainly succeeded. His *Pamela* thus becomes a significant cultural document as well as a landmark in the development of the novel.

Notes

¹ This approach is highlighted in annual "Recent Studies in the Restoration and Eighteenth Century" found in each summer issue of *SEL: Studies in English Literature*.

² See Emmett L. Avery's "The Shakespeare Ladies Club" for more details and the breakdown of the percentage of London theatre performances during each of the seasons up to Richardson's publication of *Pamela* that were devoted to plays by Shakespeare.

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Sympathetic Education in *Anne of Green Gables*

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When Anne Shirley first appears in L. M. Montgomery's 1908 novel *Anne of Green Gables*, she is being met by the laconic Matthew Cuthbert, whose first goal is to find out why Anne, and not the boy that Matthew and his sister Marilla had requested the adoption agency to send, has come to Avonlea. When Matthew approaches Anne, she unleashes what the reader experiences as a wall of words. Anne, as she readily acknowledges, talks incessantly, but the repetition of particular words can take on special importance by emphasizing the qualities and ideas that Montgomery values most. One word in particular stands out in Anne's vocabulary: *imagination*. Anne uses some variation of *imagine* or *imagination* twenty-four times in the first chapter in which she appears, and the word suffuses the novel.¹ Imagination might be said to be the quality that defines her, but the status of imagination is somewhat unstable in the novel. We might see it as a quality that opposes Marilla's no-nonsense approach to life. "Nonsense"² is one of Marilla's favorite words to describe Anne's actions, and though Montgomery never explicitly equates "imagination" and "nonsense," Anne's imagination can be seen as impractical, even harmful. Gabriella Åhmansson has argued that the word imagination in the early twentieth century could be a rough synonym for lies (370-2), so that the particular threat that Anne's imagination represented for contemporary readers was one of dishonesty. More recently, the essayist Jia Tolentina, in a piece on female heroines of children's literature, dismisses Anne quickly as "ridiculous," apparently because she attempts to dwell too much in her imagination (101). Modern readers often see imagination as something that Anne needs to outgrow; growing up is a process of letting go of make-believe to accept the real world.

However, most recent criticism on imagination in *Anne of Green Gables* works to emphasize the novel's positive uses of imagination. Mary Rubio aligns Anne's approach to imagination with the Romantic literary tradition, arguing that in Romanticism and in *Anne of Green Gables* "the vision of the individual imagination [gives] existence and shape to the external world" (35). Åhmansson follows Rubio by arguing that Montgomery wants readers to see that Anne uses the word as the Romantic poets would, as part of the gift of nature (374). These readings are useful correctives to the idea of the dangers of the imagination in the novel, and I find Åhmansson's connection to Romanticism especially compelling as a reminder that Anne, who might have stepped out of a Wordsworth poem, uses nature as a way to establish better human connections. More recently, Paige Gray argues that imagination is the force of liberation, "a vehicle of self-determination" (173). But I want to take Montgomery's use of imagination back a little further, to an eighteenth-

century thinker who found imagination to be a key component of our moral capacity. In his 1759 book *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Adam Smith conceptualizes sympathy³ largely as a product of imagination, and in this essay I argue that Montgomery emphasizes Anne's imagination so insistently to re-invigorate Smith's conception of sympathy and to teach readers about the moral responsibility of imagination as a tool for creating sympathy.

Before examining imagination too much further, I first want to focus on a passage that tends to illustrate how carefully Montgomery approaches the word "imagination" and keeps it separate from concepts that could be similar. In Chapter 29 of the novel, Anne convinces her friends to dramatize Tennyson's poem "The Lady of Shalott," with Anne drifting down the river in a flatboat as the lily maid. After a few minutes, "something happened not at all romantic," as the boat begins to leak (179). Shortly after, the boat sinks completely, and Anne is left clinging to a tree until Gilbert Blythe floats by and saves her. Anne's attempt to live the poem feels like a clear lesson: imagination is a leaky boat, and we can't dwell there permanently. Then, at the end of the chapter, the solidly practical and unimaginative Matthew Cuthbert offers up some of the most famous lines in the novel, advising Anne to practice moderation. As Anne regrets the foolishness of her plan to live out the poem, Matthew warns her not to regret too much. "'Don't give up all your romance, Anne,' he whispered shyly, 'a little of it is a good thing—not too much, of course—but keep a little of it, Anne, keep a little of it'" (184). This passage is perhaps especially interesting for what it does not say: Matthew advises Anne to hold on to her "romance," not her imagination. It is easy to conflate words like "romance" and "imagination" in this novel because they all feel like part of Anne's dreamy, larger-than-life, free-spirited personality. But Montgomery carefully preserves imagination from being read as a dangerous force because of its moral importance. "Romance," for example, might be said to be Montgomery's word for an escapist use of imagination; in this moment, "romance" conjures up the possibility of Quixote-like delusions—which, after all, resulted from reading romances. A close look at an earlier passage illustrates how Montgomery presents imagination's moral power in the novel.

In Chapter 19, Anne and her best friend Diana have the chance to attend a debating club concert, which is described as some sort of mix between bad community theater and worse community theater—but which is entirely thrilling for Anne. After the evening out, Anne is given permission to spend the night with Diana, in Diana's guest room, a proposition which holds unspeakable joy for Anne, who has never stayed in a guest room before. As such, when the girls return home, they take a running start and dive into bed, only to land on Diana's grumpy aunt Josephine Barry, who visited unexpectedly while the girls were out.

When Anne goes to apologize the next day, Miss Barry is reluctant to forgive:

"You don't know," says Miss Barry, "what it is to be awakened out of a sound sleep, after a long and arduous journey, by two great girls coming bounce down on you." "I don't *know*," said Anne eagerly, "but I can *imagine*. I'm sure it must have been very disturbing. But then, there is our side of it too. Have you any imagination, Miss Barry? If you have, just put yourself in our place. We didn't know there was anybody in that bed and you nearly scared us to death. It was simply awful the way we felt. And then we couldn't sleep in the spare room after being promised. I suppose you are used to sleeping in spare rooms. But just imagine what you would feel like if you were a little orphan girl who had never had such an honour." (130; italics in the original)

The first sentence appears to set the words “know” and “imagine” in opposition, but that opposition turns out to be different from what we might expect. Imagination is in fact a way of knowing in *Anne of Green Gables*, as a passage from Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* helps make clear. This passage feels like an unlikely comparison, as Smith asks how we can feel sympathy for a man being tortured, but the emphasis on the imaginative capacity of sympathy predicts Montgomery’s approach to imagination in *Anne of Green Gables*.

Smith asks us to imagine “our brother upon the rack,” a tortured body with whom we have no immediate sensory experience (9). He notes that even when not in the presence of the suffering, and even though we have never undergone the same suffering, we will sympathize. Smith writes, “our senses will never inform us of what he suffers,” for they “never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations” (9). If we return to the passage from *Anne of Green Gables*, we note that Anne explains that “it was simply awful the way we *felt*” and then asks Miss Barry to “imagine” what an orphan girl might “feel” (130). In Montgomery as in Smith, sympathy functions in the absence of sensory experience, in the mind of a spectator who remains at a distance. Further, sympathy happens not in the moment of experience, but over time, as a product of reflection. And, crucially, Anne does not ask Miss Barry to feel what she feels: she asks her to “imagine” what she feels, to intellectualize the experience of another’s emotion.

Another passage from Smith helps build the case for sympathy as an intellectualized response over time rather than, for example, a spontaneous overflow of emotion. Smith writes of sympathetic experiences:

In all such cases, that there may be some correspondence of sentiments between the spectator and the person principally concerned, the spectator must, first of all, endeavor, as much as he can, to put himself in the situation of the other, and to bring home to himself every little circumstance of distress which can possibly occur to the sufferer. He must adopt the whole case of his companion with all its minutest incidents; and strive to render as perfect as possible, that imaginary change of situation upon which his sympathy is founded. (21)

Again, this passage is important for what is missing; that is, it is important for what sympathy is *not*: it is not, in Smith’s theory, a simultaneous emotional response to the moment at hand. Instead, sympathy is a process of thoughtful reflection that unfolds over time, an intellectual and imaginative and *willed* response rather than, for example, a bodily response, or a direct response to the intensity of the moment.

If we return to the passage from Montgomery, it is fair to say that Anne invites Miss Barry to go over “the whole case” (Smith 21) including “all its minutest incidents” (Smith 21) to instruct Miss Barry on how to sympathize. Anne has set into motion the mental process of sympathizing that Miss Barry needs to undertake. And because this is a novel, the lesson works perfectly. Immediately after this explanation by Anne the narrator reports, “all the snap had gone by this time. Miss Barry actually laughed” (130). Miss Barry then responds, “I’m afraid my imagination is a little rusty—it’s so long since I used it” (130). This last sentence feels comfortable for modern readers because it seems to place imagination as a quality especially associated with children. But I would suggest that we should focus instead on the idea that Miss Barry’s imagination got rusty, *not* because she is older, but because she did not *practice* the act of sympathy, which in Smith and Montgomery’s view is not an emotion but a process, even a mechanism, that combines intellect and will.

This intellectualizing of sympathy, as Rae Greiner has shown, is especially pertinent to the realist novel, where writers like George Eliot adopt Smith's model of sympathy as a "subject [actively] reflecting in time," at least in part because Smith's version of sympathy has "a fundamentally narrative design" (298), particularly in its temporality. A more emotional or somatic understanding of sympathy might fit better with the sentimental novels of the eighteenth century or sensation fiction of the Victorian era. As we can see even in the short passage above, Montgomery follows Smith in suggesting that sympathy unfolds over time, in the imagination of a spectator who is at some distance. I borrow from Greiner again in suggesting that Smith's concept of sympathy earns primacy of place in the realist novel because the form of Smithian sympathy is essentially narrative and particularly readerly. That is, the process of sympathy unfolds over time in the mind of a spectator who is not actively involved in the sensory experience of the subject. Good readers make good sympathizers.

At least, that is the hope of many readers and of many literature professors. In her book *Empathy and the Novel*, Suzanne Keen interrogates the arguments for the novel's efficacy in teaching empathy, ultimately suggesting that this might be a misplaced faith. But the idea that literature can teach readers to be better people—defined specifically as more empathetic—seems essential to Montgomery's project in *Anne of Green Gables*. My argument does not, however, go so far as to try to establish that the novel succeeds in teaching empathy but instead focuses on how Montgomery builds an argument for the power of imagination: *Anne of Green Gables* presents imagination not as a childhood indulgence but as an essential moral capacity that allows us to practice sympathy.

Further, the novel's argument for imagination and sympathy also marks an important shift in thinking about how a child's imagination can affect others. In *Reading Children's Literature: A Critical Introduction*, Carrie Hintz and Eric Tribunella argue that Anne is a transitional figure between the useful child, who brings economic benefit to the family and "the sacred child whose function it is to bring parents joy, to be an object of emotional investment rather than an economic contributor, and to be nurtured and served by parents rather than the reverse" (37). That formulation seems to me to be reasonable and justifiable, but Montgomery is not quite done with the idea of the useful child. One of her contributions is to rewrite the idea of useful—instead of farm labor, Anne exists in large part to perform the emotional labor that Marissa and Matthew Cuthbert have been unable to perform for themselves. They are siblings, not a married couple, and they need Anne to complete the sympathetic connections that can create a family. Further, Anne is the one who does the nurturing and serving more often than not, so that in the history of children's literature we might think of her as the transitional figure who begins a new era of children teaching adults to be better.

Comparing *Anne of Green Gables* to a few other nineteenth-century novels featuring (or written for) children helps make Montgomery's innovation clearer. The tradition of seeing the Romantic child as the educator of adults does not hold up across the nineteenth century as well as some might think. Charles Dickens's perfect children often highlight the inadequacies of adults, but Little Nell, David Copperfield, or Flo Dombey hardly teach adults to be better—they simply expose adult inadequacies. Does Marmee really learn anything from Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy? In *Little Women* Louisa May Alcott sees Marmee's role as one of educating the girls; they need her guidance on how to act as moral beings in the world, and Marmee essentially has nothing to learn. Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* perhaps gets a little closer to the idea of children as teachers, for Dickon Sowerby—that rural child who seems to have sprung from the soil as surely as the

seeds that he sows—serves as source of sympathetic education, but only for the other children in the novel, Mary and Colin. By looking backward to the eighteenth century, *Anne of Green Gables* marks a turning point in children's literature by attempting to use narrative not only to teach young readers the practice of imaginative sympathy but also by enacting imaginative sympathy to morally improve adults in the novel. While the twenty-first century reader might value children's imaginative capabilities for their contributions to creativity and wonder, *Anne of Green Gables* invites the reader to remember that sympathy for others is an imaginative capacity, one worth cultivating for both children and adults.

Notes

¹ A search for “imagin,” which gives hits for both *imagine* and *imagination*, in the Gutenberg Project's full-text version of *Anne of Green Gables* turns up 176 uses in the text and one in a chapter title. For the sake of comparison, “roman,” which gives hits for *romance*, *romantic*, and *unromantic*, appears 45 times (the word *Roman* does not appear in the novel). *Avonlea*, the name of the town in which the novel largely takes place, appears only 92 times.

² “Nonsense” appears eighteen times in the novel; fourteen of those uses are direct quotes of Marilla or references to what Marilla was thinking.

³ Throughout this essay, I use the term sympathy. Empathy is first recorded in English in 1895, where it is proposed as a psychological term. Its use as a replacement for sympathy to mean an identification with the feelings of others is recorded for the first time in 1909, a year after *Anne of Green Gables* is published. Further, sympathy, with an etymology of “feeling together” rather than empathy's etymology of “putting feeling into something,” seems to me to fit Montgomery's mission in *Anne of Green Gables* much more clearly; additionally, it's the word that Smith uses, and the word most available to Montgomery when writing her novel. That said, the best synonym for Smith and Montgomery's conception of sympathy might be *cognitive empathy*. Keen's discussion of terms in *Empathy and the Novel* (see pp. 37-64) offers a robust consideration of the intellectual history of sympathy, sensibility, and empathy. As mentioned later in this essay, her study focuses primarily on novels written after the word *empathy* has entered the English language and on how novels might create empathy their readers, whereas this essay focuses on how Montgomery creates an argument about the power of sympathy within the novel (while also implying that readers can learn sympathy from the novel).

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Child Abuse in J.K. Rowling's *The Casual Vacancy* and *The Sorcerer's Stone*

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In *The Casual Vacancy*, J.K. Rowling's first novel after the Harry Potter series, readers become familiar with various families in the English town of Pagford. Among the many characters we meet, two children stand out: teenager Krystal Weedon and her much younger brother, Robbie, the children of Terri Weedon, a single parent and heroin addict who is ultimately unable to break the cycle of addiction. Two other youths in the community suffer neglect or actual abuse from a parent as well. Andrew and Paul Price suffer at the hands of their abusive father and also witness his constant verbal abuse of their mother, although the Price boys do not share as hopeless a situation as Krystal and Robbie Weedon. Moreover, throughout *The Casual Vacancy*, students periodically experience bullying and even physical abuse at the hands of their schoolmates.

These painful stories of child neglect and abuse might seem an unlikely focus from the author of the Harry Potter series of novels which delighted children and teens as well as adult readers, and clearly Rowling's first post-Potter novel seems to have surprised or shocked and perhaps disappointed some readers who had loved her earlier books. In fact, bookstores across the country had hosted crowded, well-attended parties before the midnight release of the books in the Harry Potter series, and therefore many readers may have expected *The Casual Vacancy* to be more like the series of Potter novels they and in most cases, their children, had come to love. Some early promotion for Rowling's new novel included Kristen Mascia's enthusiastic (at times effusive) call to readers of *People Magazine*: "J.K. Rowling obsessives, get ready: Her new book is on the way!" Then in a short summary, Mascia describes the plot of "The Potter scribe's first novel for adults," which she says "is set in an idyllic English town called Pagford, which is thrown into turmoil . . . after the untimely death of a parish councillor" (45).

In fact, many, if not most, readers would reject Mascia's description of Pagford as "an idyllic English town," agreeing instead with Lev Grossman's early review of *The Casual Vacancy*, in which he described Rowling's new work as "not so much an extension of the Harry Potter books as their negative image. It's a painfully arbitrary and fallen world that, bereft of the magic that animates and ennobles Hogwarts, sags and cracks under its own weight." Grossman makes clear that although he had "expected a kind of aged-up, magicked-down Harry Potter, showcasing the same strengths the Potter books did," he "instead find[s] in *The Casual Vacancy* 'a magnificently eloquent novel of contemporary England, rich with literary intelligence and bereft of cant.'"

Clearly, *The Casual Vacancy* would be an unlikely reading assignment for children or tweens. On the other hand, the Harry Potter novels were loved by children, promoted by teachers as works that would help hook children on the pleasures of reading, and turned into films which many more children enjoyed viewing. Child abuse and neglect, however, is a major theme within both the Potter novels and Rowling's more realistic later novel. How then does the magical world of Harry Potter work as children's literature, while the more graphic depiction of similar neglect or abuse in *The Casual Vacancy* makes it unlikely that parents today would be proud to announce that their grade-school or middle-school child was currently reading Rowling's more recent novel?

First of all, child neglect and abuse were clearly depicted in the stories of the young wizard, Harry Potter. Not counting the brief sighting in the opening chapter of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* of "a baby boy, fast asleep" with a "tuft of jet-black hair" which covers "a curiously shaped cut, like a bolt of lightning" (11) who is being delivered to the Dursleys by Dumbledore and Hagrid, readers first see Harry as a ten-year-old wearing his cousin's hand-me-down clothes and sleeping in the spider-ridden cupboard under the stairs. Moreover, he is sometimes punished by being locked in that cupboard for misdeeds he has not committed, as when Aunt Petunia cut his hair so that he was "almost bald," but the hair grew back overnight, and Aunt Petunia had punished him with "a week in his cupboard for this" (19). In fact, being locked in his cupboard has evidently been a frequent punishment for Harry, who is threatened by his Uncle Vernon on Dudley's birthday: "I'm warning you," he had said, putting his large purple face right up close to Harry's: "I'm warning you now, boy—any funny business, anything at all—and you'll be in that cupboard from now until Christmas" (19). Yet Vernon Dursley is the closest thing Harry has to a father figure up until age eleven when he first learns about his actual parents and heritage and receives the invitation to come to school at Hogwarts. Despite his growing awareness of a new, better world at Hogwarts and a growing sense of his own powers, Harry is still subjected (although less directly) to some abuse and neglect during summer vacations spent with his muggle family members, his only surviving relatives who sadly have no love for him.

Moreover, readers soon become aware of bullying by classmates, even at Hogwarts. For example, we learn that "Harry had never believed he would meet a boy he hated more than Dudley, but that was before he met Draco Malfoy" (118). Yet in one of his first encounters with Malfoy, Harry acts out of compassion for Neville, who has just broken his wrist in his (and Harry's) first flying lesson. Neville is taken off to the infirmary, and Malfoy (whose name of course translates as "bad faith") has flown above the other students carrying poor Neville's Remembrall (a glass ball Neville has recently received from his grandmother). High above the others, Malfoy tosses the glass ball with the taunt "Catch it if you can, then!" (123). Determined to retrieve the Remembrall for Neville, Harry gathers "speed in a steep dive, racing the ball" before he "stretched out his hand—a foot from the ground" and caught the Remembrall "safely in his fist" (123). Having been the mistreated victim in the first eleven years of his life while staying with his muggle aunt and uncle and their incredibly spoiled son, Harry begins already in his first year at Hogwarts to stand up against such bullies, and here he chooses to stand up for poor Neville. Flying on his broomstick for the first time, Harry not only stops a bully like Malfoy, but "in a rush of fierce joy he realized he'd found something he could do without being taught—this was easy, this was *wonderful*" (123). Professor McGonagall, having delivered Neville to the infirmary, returns in time to see Harry's flight and his easy catch of the Remembrall, which is only "the size of a large marble" (119). Recognizing Harry's potential as an athlete, she arranges for

him to join the Quidditch team, even though it will mean “bend[ing] the first year rule” (125) for him to play. After spending eleven years as an outsider with his aunt and uncle, who had refused to speak of Harry’s late mother and father, Harry hears from Professor McGonagall that “Your father would have been proud . . . He was an excellent Quidditch player himself” (125).

While there may be bullies, demanding teachers like Snape, and sometimes difficult situations at his new school, Hogwarts is nevertheless a haven for Harry compared to those early years of his life spent with his aunt, uncle, and cousin Dudley. Readers have sometimes questioned how an orphan boy mistreated and neglected and seemingly mistrusted by the adults responsible for his care throughout the first eleven years of his life could turn out so well. One such reader, Karl Smallwood, has even suggested that Hogwarts “was all in Harry’s mind.” According to Smallwood, Harry, a victim of child abuse and emotional neglect, begins to cope at age eleven by “escaping into a fantasy world”—the world of wizards and Hogwarts and Quidditch games—as he imagines a giant like Hagrid coming to rescue him. Smallwood theorizes that the “Harry Potter universe” is actually a “carefully woven tapestry of lies that eventually unravels as Harry slowly starves to death in his abusive uncle’s cupboard”—a theory incidentally which Rowling has strongly denied and rejects. Clearly, Harry is actually a transcender who seems able to develop intellectually and emotionally despite the abuse and neglect he has experienced in the Dursley home.

By contrast, *The Casual Vacancy* offers readers a much more realistic view of the effects of abuse and neglect on children. We first see Krystal Weedon at school, where her surname is for her classmates both byword and dirty joke” (26). Readers learn through another student, Andrew, that “Krystal was sometimes present, often not, and that she was in almost constant trouble” at school (27). Readers learn more about Krystal when she meets with Tessa Wall, the head of guidance at Krystal’s school. Krystal is angry on the day of their meeting, angry at having been given detention which she feels she did not deserve, and Tessa, who has worked hard in her role as counselor to develop a relationship with the girl, realizes that “Nearly two years of gossamer-fine trust, laboriously spun between them, was stretching, on the point of tearing” (43).

While Harry Potter is able to transcend the decade of poor treatment he received from the Dursleys, Krystal is clearly the product of an unfortunate home life, causing her to experience neglect and abuse, which she will never be unable to overcome. Living with her mother and brother, Krystal at age sixteen finds herself often taking care of her little brother, Robbie Weedon, since their mother is a recovering heroin addict who is eventually unable to “keep off the smack,” (80), as a member of the Child Protection team observes. Krystal herself repeatedly expresses anger at her mother’s failure to stay drug-free or to get Robbie to preschool, fearing that “Robbie would be taken away again, and this time he might not come back. In a little red plastic heart hanging from the key ring in Krystal’s pocket was a picture of Robbie, aged one” (109).

Deirdre Donahue, writing a review in *USA Today*, makes the case that in *The Casual Vacancy*, “Rowling depicts a world of misery at every economic level: abusive fathers, suicidal teenagers, adulterous husbands,” and warns that the novel is “not for children or [for] adult readers who don’t enjoy dark, gritty drama.” Irene Visser and Laura Kaai speculate that had the book not been penned by the author of the Harry Potter series, *The Casual Vacancy* “would not have become a fast-selling bestseller, and conceivably might not have made it to the bestseller lists” (205).

In some respects, however, *The Casual Vacancy* stands almost as an alternate telling of the Potter story—minus the magic and the supernatural powers of Harry

and others around him. Without magic and the accompanying wisdom Harry develops at Hogwarts, the Harry Potter story would have remained a tale of abuse, neglect, and lies. In many ways, Krystal Weedon is to some extent a female version of Harry—or at least, what Harry Potter might have become, had he never received those “letters from no one” which ultimately freed him from the Dursleys’ control. Harry, however, has several advantages over Krystal.

An orphan with no memories of or information about his parents, at Hogwarts Harry finds his birthright and his identity as the son of the late Lily and James Potter. That new identity magically replaces the neglect and abuse he had experienced with the Dursley family. No longer simply an unwanted orphan and a burden to his only living relatives, Harry is given a new set of values to replace those of the Dursley family, and a new positive self-identity. Significantly, Harry’s first notices of his acceptance to Hogwarts come shortly before his eleventh birthday, and despite Vernon Dursley’s attempts to interfere, Harry meets Hagrid on his eleventh birthday, so that he doesn’t continue to experience the severe neglect and abuse from the Dursleys into his adolescent/teen years. Through Dumbledore, his primary mentor, Harry comes to understand his heritage as James’ and Lily’s son, symbolized in part by his wand and his growing understanding of his own magical powers, but ultimately by his desire to choose good over evil and to dare to stand up against evil forces.

By contrast, in the more realistic world of *The Casual Vacancy*, Krystal is vulnerable in many ways and throughout her short life has no one to support or protect her adequately when she needs help or guidance, especially as she enters her teen years and faces difficult choices with little to no assistance from her family. While Krystal’s mother, Terri, fails to take proper care of her three-year-old son, his older sister Krystal willingly takes on responsibility for little Robbie. No one, however, is able to care enough to save Krystal and protect her. Finally, after being raped by Obbo, her mother’s drug dealer, Krystal realizes that she must escape from her mother’s home, taking Robbie with her. Victimized by family members and other adults, Krystal plans to become pregnant with classmate Fats Walls’ child, so that she will be able to “get her own place from the council” (328) and live there safely with Robbie and her baby. She dreams of a clean, “always clean” home (unlike the one she has grown up in) with “bolts and chains and locks on the door” (328) to keep out those—like Obbo—who might hurt her, her future child, or Robbie.

Her affair with Fats ends tragically, as they meet down at the river, where Krystal’s little brother, the child she has tried to protect from their mother for years, drowns. Little Robbie Weedon’s body “lay frozen and white in the morgue. Nobody had accompanied him to the hospital, and nobody had visited him in his metal drawer” (475). Grieving and guilt-filled, Krystal finds her mother’s bag of heroin and “shoots up” for the first and indeed last time, thus achieving “her only ambition: she had joined her brother where nobody could part them” (481).

When considered together, the seemingly different stories at the center of these two novels actually show an important shared theme: the ways in which adults must take responsibility for the moral and ethical education of their young charges—whether offspring, students, or other children in their lives. The *Harry Potter* series appeals to people of all ages, and the clearly evident child abuse and neglect experienced by Harry at his aunt and uncle’s home have no long-term effects on Harry. Thanks to magic and to his education at Hogwarts, Harry is able to transcend more than a decade of abuse and neglect, and the time he spends locked in the cupboard under the stairs leaves no permanent scars. In *The Casual Vacancy*, however, Rowling offers an audience of adult readers a much more realistic view of

the damage such neglect and abuse can cause in real life, culminating in the tragic deaths of Krystal and Robbie Weedon.

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City Life through the Eyes of Louis Malle and Alfred Hitchcock

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Louis Malle and Alfred Hitchcock, two of the most celebrated directors of the late 1950s, are experts at taking a well known setting and redefining it in their own terms. This skill allows each director to incorporate his unique artistic perspective into his film and to comment on the nature of his society. Malle's *Elevator to the Gallows* (1958) and Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* (1959), which are defining works in each director's filmography, patently illustrate these techniques. Through musical scores and visual experiments, both films depict city life as the manifestation of a nation's values. Malle's Paris is more than a fashionable hub of food and art while Hitchcock's New York and Chicago turn out to be more than bustling centers of business and commerce. Rather, the settings reflect the artistic mindsets of the national film cultures that they represent. While the films are the result of differing cultural values, the two directors share many of the same views about storytelling. In fact, by the time *Elevator to the Gallows* was released, Hitchcock had been redefining settings to enhance his stories and themes for many years, making his work a significant source of inspiration for Malle. Hence, *Elevator to the Gallows* and *North by Northwest* explore the same themes of moral degradation and loneliness. However, the aural and visual techniques used by both Malle and Hitchcock reveal a detached ambiguity in French culture and a search for understanding in American culture that elevate the stories from mere movies to commentaries about the cities in which they are set.

Malle's *Elevator to the Gallows* or, as it is titled in France, *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud*, has its roots in Malle's childhood and young adulthood. Born in Thumeries, France in 1932, Malle was first inspired to direct movies in 1944 when his Catholic boarding school was raided by Nazis. This institution housed several Jewish students, one of whom was Malle's close friend, as well as a Jewish instructor, all of whom were captured. According to Hugo Frey, this episode gave Malle serious trauma that led him to pursue a rebellious lifestyle full of cars, women, and money and led to his affinity for the American author F. Scott Fitzgerald. Frey writes, "like a character from Fitzgerald's writings, the young Malle was at times invincibly glamorous," but "[the director's] inclusion of the American novelist in his film-making is a subtle clue to his own ambiguous pessimism and anxiety" (24). In other words, Malle became disillusioned by this flamboyant lifestyle, which readers can see in his emphasis on the emotional emptiness that accompanies the materialistic values of bourgeoisie life. This politically driven theme is pivotal to *Elevator to the Gallows*, the story of two young couples who each commit murder during the same evening, and the tragic tone of these events is heightened by the musical score.

Malle's use of and experimentation with jazz music is one of the most recognizable aspects of the work. Critic Jean-Louis Pautrot describes Malle's use of jazz in *Elevator to the Gallows* as an example of "counterpoint," in which the music is not meant to supplement the visuals, but instead acts as its own storytelling entity (132). To create this counterpoint, Malle showed various scenes to Miles Davis and his band, who then improvised music to accompany each one. Malle then paired the recorded improvisations with scenes for which they were not intended, so that the movie's music is discordant. According to Pautrot, this method allows Malle to "create a detached, non-judgmental, documentary-like outlook at the world" that makes Paris seem like an empty place, devoid of any meaning (128). Moreover, although the movie is 92 minutes long, the soundtrack only lasts 18 minutes, creating a contrast between sound and silence that allows Malle to highlight scenes with symbolic value.

This technique is most evident during protagonist Florence's walk through Paris at night. The silence at the beginning of the scene is interrupted by calm, sultry jazz that, when paired with the fact that Florence is frantically trying to locate her lover, Julien, contradicts the mood of the scene. As Florence walks through the streets, Malle plays upon the French idea of a *flânerie*, or a stroll in which one "walks aimlessly in an urban setting . . . to revel in the urban spectacle and observe [one's] fellow man (or woman)" (Orpen 55). Actively observing the people and objects in the environment is an essential aspect of a *flânerie*. While Florence's *flânerie* shows the wonders of daily life in Paris, she does not connect with her surroundings, but rather sinks further and further into self-absorbed despondency. Florence's stroll, then, is not so much a *flânerie* to promote character growth as it is a method for Malle to explore Paris at night. His depiction of this setting is glamorous yet meaningless, serving as a reminder of the melancholy gloom that Malle saw reflected in bourgeois Parisian life.

Malle also uses several visual techniques to emphasize the detachment created by his music. The images of luxurious cars and blinding lights create a feeling of hopelessness as Florence repeatedly fails to find Julien, who has just executed their plan to murder her husband and has become trapped in an elevator. The dark sky contrasted with the bright streetlights creates a blurred *chiaroscuro* to highlight Malle's belief that the city's glamor leads to moral ambiguity. This *chiaroscuro* is used intentionally throughout the film to symbolically separate the known from the unknown. For example, when Julien lights a match to see down the elevator shaft, the darkness completely overtakes his dim source of light, signifying his lack of knowledge about the events taking place in the outside world. Malle's use of this *chiaroscuro* is an example of expressionism, or the practice of making the setting match a character's inner state (Belton 238). He further uses expressionism in tight, claustrophobic shots of the elevator's interior that show how Julien is trapped both physically and emotionally after murdering Florence's husband. Conversely, the other murderous lovers, Véronique and Louis, are free to drive a stolen car along the highway in the open air, although they ultimately get carried away with this freedom and kill two people, who suspect that the car is stolen property.

Therefore, these examples of expressionism show that no matter how the individual interacts with Paris, the city will eventually lead him or her to a place of moral degradation. This theme is one of the most dominant aspects of the New Wave cinema, which *Elevator to the Gallows* arguably initiated. Scholar Richard Neupert states that "so much of what one expects to find in a New Wave film is present in both the story and narrative style of *Elevator to the Gallows* that it deserves careful study as . . . a prototypical New Wave text" (92). The movement has to do with rejecting the filmmaking conventions of the day and experimenting

with narrative techniques. Malle tells his story by using innovative music and visuals and by alternating between plotlines to complicate the traditional framework of the crime story. New Wave cinema is characterized by these unconventional tactics, which allow Malle to manipulate his viewers' perceptions of city life. New Wave is also closely related to American *film noir*, or "a type of crime film" with "an ominous atmosphere" and "shadowy photography" ("Film Noir"). However, Neupert describes Malle's Paris as a "generic, modern glass-and-metal . . . cold and modernizing" city that highlights the action of an American *film noir* while "push[ing] character complexity and ambiguity closer to European art cinema traditions" (94-97). This tendency to embrace confusing characters classes *Elevator to the Gallows* as a distinctly European work that accepts and celebrates the characters' vague intentions. The audience is not clearly aware of any motive for Julien's crime other than blind love and has absolutely no idea why Louis and Véronique steal a car. This combination of action and ambiguity creates the daunting ambiance associated with New Wave cinema.

Yet *Elevator to the Gallows* is not classed as an official New Wave work, because Malle also combined his idea of a morally degraded city with the safer Paris from French films preceding the New Wave movement. Scholar Susan Hayward asserts that during the early and mid-1950s, the French did not depict Paris as "the hostile environment associated with the city of the American *film noir* . . . the site of paranoia that the city is in the American genre" (69). 1950s films usually portrayed Paris as a fashionable hub of food and art, not a center of crime and corruption. However, in the next decade's New Wave movement, this safer Paris was transformed into a threatening city that actively oppressed its residents. While Malle's Paris is certainly identified with detachment and emptiness, it has not yet become a menacing, active enemy. Rather, Malle uses his version of Paris to warn his audience about the temptations of a luxurious, materialistic lifestyle by showing how the two young couples' selfish attitudes result in murder and moral ruin. The city becomes a hybrid of two distinct mindsets in French cinema, and this combination helps to create the political and moral ambiguity that has come to be a trademark of Malle's work.

On the other hand, the acceptance of ambiguity is not a theme in Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*, which depicts city life as a search for knowledge. Rather than forcing viewers to watch helplessly as the characters meet their demise, most of Hitchcock's movies thrust the viewers into confusing situations in which they must figure out the truth for themselves. Born in Leytonstone, England in 1899, Hitchcock was first influenced by many of the same European themes as Malle. Yet when he moved to Hollywood, Hitchcock began to use American rather than European techniques. One such technique is the emphasis on emotional effect over message (Frayne 77-78). Many of Hitchcock's movies are primarily concerned with presenting a powerful series of images to prompt an emotional response from the viewer, rather than communicating political ideas as Malle's movies do. Hitchcock testifies to the importance of emotional response, especially regarding music, when he says, "the basis of cinema's appeal is emotional. Music's appeal is to a great extent emotional, too" (Watts 167). This mindset governs Hitchcock's approach to cinema.

The music of *North by Northwest*, the story of a man who is thrown into a government plot when he is mistaken for a spy, is less experimental than Malle's jazz. Rather than experimenting with musical improvisations to create discord, Hitchcock purposefully uses both sound and silence to supplement the events of the story. The most notable example of this method is the famous crop duster scene in which Cary Grant's character, Roger O. Thornhill, leaves Chicago to go to a lonely

roadside where he is repeatedly attacked by an unknown pilot. Although this scene does not take place in the city, it contributes to Hitchcock's portrayal of city life by counteracting the crowded, busy settings that characterize most of the film. Hitchcock juxtaposes the city with the roadside to emphasize the gravity of the protagonist's plight and the loneliness that Thornhill's experiences in the city have created. As Thornhill runs for his life, the tension of the moment is augmented by the oppressive lack of music. The only sounds that viewers can hear are Thornhill's footsteps and the workings of the crop duster. Hitchcock's omission of non-diegetic sound in this scene emphasizes that his main character is alone, and the roadside becomes hostile as Thornhill struggles to escape the crop duster attacks. This scene is a clear example of using visual expressionism to convey Thornhill's loneliness, just as Malle uses a claustrophobic elevator to express Julien's detachment from society. Ultimately, the hostility of the remote setting forces Thornhill to reenter the city so that Hitchcock can manipulate the audience's perception of city life.

Another visual technique that Hitchcock employs in *North by Northwest* is the horizontal pan, or a shot in which the camera "rotate[s] so as to keep an object in the picture or secure a panoramic effect" ("Pan"). Hitchcock uses these pans to merge interior and exterior spaces. Throughout the movie, Thornhill is constantly breaking into or out of areas where he is not supposed to be. He tries to escape an elegant manor, sneaks his way into a forbidden apartment, desperately runs onto a train, and finally attempts to enter the antagonist's own home. During the scenes on the train, this merging of interior and exterior spaces is reinforced by horizontal pans that travel from outside to inside the train (or vice versa) in a single shot. Whereas Malle uses the boundaries between the inside and outside worlds to drive his plot, Hitchcock connects spaces in this film that are supposed to be separated, although he never allows his characters to break the fourth wall, choosing to make his film a piece of art rather than an ideological message. The two directors use physical space in contrasting ways to portray the same themes of loneliness, emptiness, and moral degradation.

Hitchcock redefines his settings most of all during scenes in which Thornhill is in the city. The film begins in New York, then moves through Chicago as the protagonist tries to unravel the intricate government plan. New York and Chicago are portrayed as corrupted cities, like Malle's Paris, but Hitchcock's version of city life makes the city a villain in its own right. This depiction begins in the very first scene in which Thornhill and his secretary are walking along busy New York streets. Thornhill is entirely immersed in, and in accord with, the city and its people. Then, over the course of the movie, he is slowly separated from society, a transition that begins in an elevator which, unlike Malle's, is overcrowded. Hitchcock uses tight, close camera shots to emphasize the protagonist's uncomfortable state, which is augmented by the fact that his pursuers are also in the elevator. At the end of the scene, the elevator passengers, one of whom is his own mother, collectively mock Thornhill, indicating that he is no longer at one with the world. As Thornhill is later speaking with an important member of the United Nations, the member is suddenly killed by a thrown knife, a twist emphasized by sudden loud music. As the threatening public surrounds him and assumes his guilt, Thornhill flees. Hitchcock portrays the protagonist's sudden loneliness through an extremely high overhead shot in which viewers can barely see Thornhill's body running out of the building, once again revealing the city and its people as enemies. This villainization of city life is repeated countless times throughout the film. Hitchcock's portrayal of American city life is much more hostile than Malle's Paris, which suggests that *North by Northwest* is more concerned with violence and paranoia than *Elevator to the Gallows*.

Moreover, as a director who created both European and American films, Hitchcock noticed differences between these film cultures during the 1950s and 1960s, one of which, according to John P. Frayne, is “that American taste . . . was more feminine-dominated than [European] taste” (82). The inclusion of strong female characters is evident in *North by Northwest* in Eva Maria Saint’s portrayal of the sly, quick-witted Eve Kendall. Conversely, Yori Bertin’s Véronique and Jeanne Moreau’s Florence in *Elevator to the Gallows* are dependent on male characters to secure their own happiness. The American theme of independent women permeates many of Hitchcock’s Hollywood movies, while the ambiguous characters of European cinema make Malle’s heroines far less bold. However, the emphasis on driven heroines in American culture may not be as much of a testament to advanced feminist ideals as it is to a cultural need for clarity and understanding. Clearly defined characters provide a certain stability to the story that, in American film culture, allows directors to communicate definitive themes. Even though Eve Kendall’s identity is one of many that are never quite clear to the protagonist, viewers can plainly see that she is a confident and capable woman. This common character trope allows Hitchcock to ground his complicated plot in strong themes such as liberation and self-reliance. As Vivian C. Sobchack contends, “American films have rarely announced their own complexity,” meaning that the “need to ‘read’ or ‘decode’ most American films often appears pretentious, if not unnecessary” because audiences can easily understand a movie’s themes by the time it concludes (284). The presence of the strong heroine in *North by Northwest* is directly related to the audience’s need for clear and powerful themes as opposed to the ambiguous characterizations of European cinema.

While Malle embraces vague characters and a sense of overall hopelessness throughout *Elevator to the Gallows*, in *North by Northwest*, Hitchcock gradually reveals information to make his film a journey towards understanding. Even though Hitchcock initially thrusts his viewers and his protagonist into a confusing situation in which no character’s identity is known, the film ultimately reaches a satisfying conclusion in which Thornhill and viewers finally understand the government plot. Malle, on the other hand, introduces his characters and their objectives immediately. The ambiguity of the film is instead created by the characters’ lack of satisfying motives. Such a contrast between the American need for understanding and closure and the French acceptance of uncertainty and vagueness is a testament to the differing values of these cultures during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Despite this clash of ideologies, both films depict criminal underworlds in a glamorous and sophisticated way, with bright scenes populated by refined characters wearing suits and speaking precisely and politely. The thrilling events of *Elevator to the Gallows* and *North by Northwest* are reminiscent of *film noir*, which classes crime as a plot device rather than a reality with societal and moral implications. Malle’s version of the crime plot as a framework for experimentation makes an individual’s actions seem inconsequential, while Hitchcock is more concerned with creating the stunning contrast between glossy visuals and dark subjects. The sophistication of the criminals shown in these movies lends an element of unreality to city life. The settings are not happy or idealistic, but neither are they ravaged by physical hardships and gritty criminals, redefining the cities’ identities.

Although *Elevator to the Gallows* and *North by Northwest* address the same themes and use the same techniques, they often do so in opposite ways. Both movies use innovative music and cinematographic expressionism to create glorified versions of crime, death, and the harshness of city life. Furthermore, the directors redefine the stereotypes of city life to create an empty and, in Hitchcock’s case, antagonistic view of their respective societies. Yet the French film accepts the

existence of vagueness, while the American film is enamored of the journey towards knowledge, which eventually leads to a satisfying conclusion. The technical expertise and artistic storytelling in these films reflect the values of the nations and film cultures in which the directors operate. Malle and Hitchcock utilize these values skillfully, each creating his own masterpiece that redefines city life in a revolutionary way.

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The Effect of Nonstandard Language on the Perception of Cuteness in Animal Memes

By Cailin Wile

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From the years 1995 to 2018, the amount of internet users increased from less than 1% to almost 51% of the world's population (The World Bank). This steady rise in internet use has resulted in higher rates of text-based communication. While this technology makes it easy to send a quick message to a friend or family member over a range of social media platforms, text alone cannot convey the depth of nuance that tone of voice or body language are able to. For this reason, new methods of producing these nuances are used on the internet. One solution to this problem is the "meme." Though the term is difficult to define or pin down to one type of post, for the purposes of this paper, "memes" will refer to "captioned images that typically consist of a picture and a witty message or a catchphrase" ("Image Macros"). The images in these memes provide the reader with visual cues similar to body language; however, the image is not the only aspect that affects a meme's interpretation. The use of intentionally ungrammatical language and misspelled words can clue the reader into the "proper" interpretation of the meme itself when body language or tone of voice are not at the rhetor's disposal. For a person with little experience on social media, this nonstandard language might be confusing, as much of the interpretation depends on prior exposure to these words. This confusion often leads to misunderstandings that, according to linguist Susan Herring, can lead to a fear of "the supposed widespread decline of young people's language skills" (5) as a perceived result of their time on the internet. I seek to showcase some of the patterns of nonstandard language and how they are used to enhance cuteness in animal memes to illustrate their legitimacy as a form of communication in digital spaces.

The term "meme" was first coined by British biologist Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*, and was used to describe "the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation" (143). Long before they came to be associated with the internet phenomenon, memes took the form of small bits of culture that were transmitted from person to person. A specific type of meme that was popular before the internet—phrases that could be changed for a specific situation based on a recognizable formula—were actually given an official name *because* of the internet. These phrases included "X is the new Y," "X is my middle name," and "To X or not to X," and were dubbed "Snowclones" in 2004 by linguists Geoffrey K. Pullman and Glen Whitman ("Snowclones").

Mememes that were specific to the internet came into popularity in the late 90s and early 2000s (Cantrell), and with them came the use of many types of nonstandard language. "LOLcats" were some of the first popular animal memes, which consisted of "humorous photos of cats with superimposed text written in a form of broken

English known as lolspeak” (“LOLcats”). “Lolspeak” is a type of language typically associated with baby talk that is used to make the animals in the images appear more childlike. Though LOLcats refers only to the memes about cats in particular, many image macros from this time period followed the same format. Early patterns of spelling in lolspeak include adding “z” where “s” would go, as in “I can has cheezburger” (“I Can Has”). These misspellings are paired with nonstandard grammar to mirror a toddler’s imperfect grasp of standard English. Early meme formats followed some general spelling patterns of their own, but the spellings varied slightly depending on who created the meme, such as “I needs” instead of “I needz,” or “I can haz” instead of “I can has.” The sound and spelling changes in earlier memes were newer and less standardized, therefore decreasing the exposure that a user would have to these language patterns. In the same way that the phrase “To be or not to be” evolved over time as the formula for a verbal meme, “I can has cheezburger” became a recognizable format after which internet users modeled their own phrases to convey the same rhetorical effect.

Later examples of nonstandard language focused on different methods of change altogether, and followed more recognizable patterns, as shown in Table 1:

Original Word	Replace Vowel with O	Replace Letter with M	Combination
Chunky	Chonky	X	Chomky
Chubby	X	Chumby	Chomby
Crunch	Cronch	Crumch	Cromch
Small	Smol	X	X
Large	Lorge	X	X

(Table 1)

One of the most common patterns of language change in contemporary memes is the replacement of any first vowel sound in a word with “o.” Some of the most prevalent examples of this are in the words “chonky,” “cronch,” and “smol.” This sound change helps draw the word out, making it look and sound cuter to the reader. While anything can be chunky, “chonky” is only used to describe things (usually animals) that are both *cute* and chunky. Similarly, “smol” describes something that is both cute and small.

Though rarer, the changing of consonants in the language of memes can also convey the aspect of cuteness. The most common change is the replacement of “n” with “m,” creating a softer and cuter sound. This change actually occurs less frequently on its own and is typically applied after a vowel change, like in the words “chonky,” “chomby,” and “cromch.” The version “cromch” actually appears so frequently that on the popular internet forum, Reddit, there is a subreddit called r/cromch that features user-submitted photos of animals biting things. With 87,300 subscribers to this particular subreddit as of December 27th, 2020, it is safe to say that “cromch” is an accepted variant of crunch on the internet (“r/cromch”).

In addition to the specific patterns in Table 1, there are other sound and spelling changes that words can undergo to enhance the effect of cuteness that do not follow patterns that are as obvious or specific as the ones above. Animal names often get changed to shorter versions of themselves, like “snake” to “snek.” Nick Douglas states in his article, “‘Snek’ is the Slithering, Scaly, Surprisingly Adorable Heir to Doge,” that this new word “turns snakes into ferocious little guys pathetically trying

to assert themselves. Sneks aren't scary. They talk a big game, but they're basically puppies." Googling "snake" will return images of slithering animals with their fangs out, poised to strike. "Snek," on the other hand, results in images of snakes wearing hats, curling up in flowers, or engaging in any number of non-threatening activities. In this case, the use of nonstandard spelling has actually helped to dispel a lot of the negative connotations that surround snakes as a whole.

In a similar way, the word "birb" is often used to make "bird" sound cuter. Though birds aren't typically as feared as snakes are, they do benefit from their name change as well. A Google image search for "bird" results in more clinical pictures of a wide variety of birds, including owls and eagles. The results for "birb" feature pet birds, like parrots, parakeets, and cockatiels, almost exclusively. "Borb" is variation that is used specifically for chubby birds, after it undergoes the aforementioned "o" vowel change. By changing the spelling of "bird," the rhetor can reflect the physical appearance of that bird through text alone. Though a person would normally see an image in a meme, the need for the image decreases once this spelling change has occurred: even writing "borb" in text-only format—like an SMS or Facebook message—conjures images of small, fat birds, with or without the image to guide the imagination.

In addition to common patterns of nonstandard spelling, the internet has also given rise to intentionally ungrammatical language. Jennifer Bivens, who studies the linguistic changes that comprise the popular internet speech trend called "doggo speak," states that the captions on these memes continuously follow the same patterns of "intentional misspellings, omissions, transformations, and other modifications of English" (2-3). Bivens tracked the changes that phrases had to undergo in order to become "doggo" phrases, and reported that doggo speak has "a basic sentence ordering of [do, INDIRECT OBJ, a, GERUND] . . . [and] without an indirect object in the sentence, the ordering would be [do, a, GERUND]" (7). This results in sentences like "he is doing me a frighten" (8) and "he is doing a happy" (9). This specific syntax helps the rhetor communicate that these are the dogs' own thoughts, and that the dogs are childlike and have a shaky grasp of English grammar.

So why is this nonstandard language so popular on the internet? Jessica Boddy from NPR quotes linguist Gretchen McCulloch, who says "[y]ou're taking on characteristics of how people would address their animals in the first place." McCulloch goes on to state that it's easy for these words to enter vocabulary because they're "new cutesy word[s] for a thing you're already used to using cutesy words for." Nonstandard grammar and spelling are also used to create a childlike dialect through changing syntax or eliminating parts of speech, which coincides with the human desire to anthropomorphize animals. The idea of animals as children is very common, especially on social media where many "pet parents" have separate Twitter or Instagram accounts for their "fur babies," and create captions and respond to comments using the first person as though the animals themselves are speaking. In the same way that "believing that a dog feels guilty after knocking over a vase may help someone bond with their pet" ("Anthropomorphism"), attributing human-like characteristics to an animal may help humans connect to the animal more closely, as a person might with their own human child. Similarly, because anyone with access to the internet can create a meme, people often make ones featuring their own pets. Taking part in a community that uses forms of grammar and spelling that are specific to it alone can lead to a sense of belonging that might also enhance the emotional effect of seeing an animal meme, and in turn increase the perceived effect of cuteness.

The use of nonstandard language in animal memes serves two main purposes: to create versions of words that depict a more accurate representation of an image or idea, e.g. “smol,” or to anthropomorphize animals in order to further endear them to humans. These changes are not made at random, but are part of a new method of creating nuance on the internet. At a time when some people believe that “language in the mouths (or on the keyboards) of youth is in a state of rapid decay” (Herring 5), and are using these nonstandard forms of spelling and grammar to justify their point, it is important to take a deeper look at these perceived errors and recognize their linguistic and rhetorical value. These patterns of language change were created to make text-based communication almost as nuanced as face-to-face communication, and have bent the limitations of standard language to do so.

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After Reading “Why Look at Animals?” by John Berger

By Don Boes

Bluegrass Community and Technical College

Meerkats and painted dogs cluster
like victims against the plexiglass. Okapi
acknowledge us with their formidable backs.
We crawl across the hot asphalt
in flip-flops while white lions
ignore us from the shade. We apply
our senior discounts to appreciate
these creatures before they disappear
but they do not give us the time of day.
We are feeling colonial and defeated
so we skip the gift shop.
At home I found a young sparrow
dead of a broken neck, the beak open
and blood on the bricks.
I buried a heart no less intense than mine.
A zoo cannot help but disappoint.

Safety First

By Don Boes

Bluegrass Community and Technical College

So many sensational videos of quotidian
scenarios! Dry shoes on a wet floor.

Feeling sad while shopping for toys.
Removing the hook from the mouth

of a fish. The hook. The fish.
What I thought was a copy room epiphany

was restructured as a fluorescent lawsuit.
Friction and the lack of it—but let us

not speak of my personal life.
According to stock photos, ladders

and clowns are reasons to be jumpy.
Prepare to fall from the lowest step.

Look both ways and read labels.
Keep stairwells clear of characters.

In case of elevators, avoid fire.
Check baggy suits and red wigs at the door.

Spring Training

By Don Boes

Bluegrass Community and Technical College

A massage therapist prepares my taxes
and my neighbor's fortune-telling brother
landscapes my yard, the gate unlatched
so he can come and go. I suffer
from low attendance and rain delays.
Criminal activity spikes
after the last hard frost
as do all manner of floods,
fires, tornadoes, wrong-way driving,
and fights, mostly between people
who love each other too much
or hate each other too much.
My workload is increasing but not my karma.
I can't decide whether to mark
my most dazzling student
absent or present. Video replay
is inconclusive. The patio furniture
is plastic, if you can call
a few crooked bricks a patio. I call
that stack of papers my career. My pitch count
is a topic of discussion
and my off-speed stuff
no longer fools the rookies.
My counsel encourages me to sign
the waiver. My employer
encourages me to embrace life-long learning.
Don't I ride an arthritic horse
up and down a mucky slope? Don't I stick
my hand in the cage?

Girl in the Mirror

By Edy Thomas

Eastern Kentucky University

You see her in the full-body mirror of your bedroom, her pensive face the reflection of your churning stomach. She is as real as you, tilting her head as you tilt yours, scrunching her nose as you scrunch yours. A silver ring is punched through her left nostril, though, while your ring hoops through the center of your bottom lip. This isn't the only difference, but it's the first you notice.

The water in the bucket by your kneeling feet spins, flakes of old paint at the bottom, while the new additions of yellow paint lie across the surface like an oil spill. The sunshine drips from your brush, resting between your forefinger and thumb, and it ripples your little toxic pool until it mimics the waves roaring in the pit of your stomach.

For a moment, you continue to kneel and stare at your not-reflection, and for that moment, she does the very same; she wields a paintbrush, too, but hers is worn down, the bristles frayed and stuck out like hurricane-swept hair. Green drips from her brush—the grass of a meadow—and you lean forward to catch a peek of her canvas, but she mimics this.

Abruptly, you both return upright—springboards—and turn your heads to gaze at your respective paintings.

And yet, you're turning to your not-reflection again, setting your paintbrush across the top of your bucket. You hear the small clicks of her brush's metal banding against the plastic of her bucket as she does the same, then the shuffling of her feet when she pulls her legs beneath her. Her bones crack, her toes, her ankles; and she lets out a gasp, you a shiver; and you study her face as if she were truly the face you see every time you brush your teeth.

You believe it to be a face you have seen once before, maybe in a dream, maybe on some sidewalk in a town you used to know the name of, glancing at you in passing—only ever in passing. This is a soft face, round edges, full lips, a nose with a bump in the bridge that aches for affection.

Her eyes are green. Her teeth are white.

The longer she inhabits your brain, the more you catch yourself edging closer to the full-body mirror propped against the wall by your bed. She does the same. She speaks to you in a voice you swear can heal any ailment you may suffer.

"What are you painting?" she asks, and you tell her, "I have no idea."

Her mouth twists as if she is laughing the absence of sound. "Yeah," she remarks. "Same here."

You say, "Where did you come from?"

She says, "Where did you go?"

You roll your eyes.

Now, she laughs—full of life, full of song, throwing her head back to the ceiling that looks like your own. “Come now,” she says, and she says, quieter this time, “Come now.”

Your fingertips are saltshakers in the hands of children; they tremble when you raise your hand and approach the glass of your mirror. She sits there, watching you. Her eyes say, *Hello*. Her lips say, *You are too far away*.

Your heart begins to hum a tune you know not well.

She waves, the very tips of her fingers curling, curling, curling.

Bending at your touch, the mirror gives beneath your weight.

Finding Life in the Graveyard

By Marianne Peel
Independent Scholar

Weaving our way through the scrub sanctuary
our feet take on the sand
and the ash
of a deliberate burn.

Our steps shrouded
in the most fragile of silences.
Whole trees lay prone on the ground
hollowed out from the proscribed flames.

The fires burned here
unevenly, indiscriminate
of wings or bud
of bloom or leaf.

And if we listen with places our ears
cannot hear,
green tendrils now sing
from the knotholes.

A wordless lyric
accompanied by scrub jays and a southerly wind.
Palm leaves lattice themselves
with pine needles, precarious on charred branches.

There is no limit
to this resurgence of living vines
in this graveyard place.

And if we listen with places our ears cannot hear,
we absorb this sanctuary cadenza
open-throated and leaning into the light, echoing
reborn,
 reborn,
 reborn.

Pelican Seeking Refuge

By Marianne Peel
Independent Scholar

This morning I wondered if you would fly into the window
confused, seeking safe shelter.

The wind was so close,
the water moving thunderstruck under your wings.

Heaviest of flying birds, air sacs breathing in your bones,
lightening your heft, your load.

But today there is no sea fowl
in the bellows of your beak.

You take refuge on the marble sill,
webs dangling over the edge.

Your breast is wounded,
opened to the salt breezes

You have been feeding your young
on your own blood offering during this scarcity of food.

Beak piercing your chest, again and again,
a self-inflicted opening of feather and flesh.

You are a banquet of ceremonial wine,
a feast of red river freshwater droplets

You gather them up,
urge them to suckle long and deep.

The lightning startles you,
shakes you from your landlocked perch.

I watch you take flight.
You are magical and exhausted
in your buoyancy.

No Prohibitions

By Marianne Peel
Independent Scholar

- I. A mourning dove landed on the bow
 coo-cooing her way into our river picnic.
- I want her to lick the mango juice off my chin.
- I brought the strawberries and mango,
 cut them in slices so thin, almost translucent.
- You brought the quince mead. Homemade
 from your private still out behind the barn.
- The rowboat had one small hole.
 All afternoon we bailed each other out
- scooping algae water
 from between our toes.
- II. You are shirtless for the first time.
 Shoulders rowing in a syncopated rhythm.
- You stop and point to the snapping turtle
 sunbathing on a log.
- We are wordless in this place,
 dove and turtle for company in the silence.
- You row,
 placing the oars silently in the water.
- I wonder how you connect with the water
 in such a solitary, tender way.

- III. Between the soft paddling,
 I see indentations in your back,

 places where shards from the mortar rounds
 imbedded in your spine.

 Those months when you muscled your way through jungles
 in Cambodia, the secret war, and letters home were all lies.

 *On a good day, you told your sister,
 it's like a Boy Scout camp without rain.*

 *Just us and the fire
 and the innocuous night,* you told her.
- IV. I want to touch your back,
 place my fingers in your scars.

 Soothe them with mango juice and quince mead,
 a healing balm.

 Shrapnel from another time.

Lunch Break at Kara Tepe Refugee Camp, Lesvos, Greece

By Marianne Peel
Independent Scholar

I find the bin with spanakopita,
ferreting out the one with crusted edges.

I wish I craved olives, so many jars.
I settle for pomegranate juice and a brick of feta.

These I bury in my backpack
and then hike to the loading dock for a sit.

There are no olive trees for shade here,
just the blisters of the full afternoon sun.

I take off my sandals,
feeling the scorch of the pavement.

My hands drip with olive oil
and flakes of phyllo dough.

Peacock anemones carpet the spring field.
Winged sea lavender blooms onto the rocky shore.

As I climb back up the hill,
I long for someone to kiss my pomegranate lips.

Alone

By Megan Hutchinson
Western Kentucky University

I got away. I ran out of that house as quick as my legs could take me. That's what Mother would tell me to do. She doesn't like me talking to anyone I don't know, especially when I'm alone.

"I'll just be gone a minute," she had said. She had her pocketbook in her hand and her brown Oxford shoes on her feet. They looked dusty from walking on that dirt road to the general store so many times, but they still looked pretty on her. "Now mind your granny and do the dishes while I'm out." Then she disappeared out the door to Clifford's.

It got quiet. "Granny?" I called out. No answer. I kept calling her name all through the house. Cupped my hands to the windows to see if I could see Granny feeding the chickens or Pawpaw turning the dirt over in the field. I called their names again and again, until my voice felt like a stranger's in my ear. I was alone.

Sometimes I get scared when I'm alone. The shadows get darker and they grow until they're coming right at me, like the ones that chase after me in my nightmares. I'm not usually so scared of them anymore, because I'm a big girl, but today something awful happened: a man came inside. He busted the door right down, and Mother's nice glass broke everywhere. He tried to grab me, so I ran outside and into the woods even though Mother doesn't like me to.

Besides, Minnie ran away. She's an inside dog mostly. She chases the chickens when she's out, and Mother and Granny don't like that all too much, but the man scared her so bad she ran right out into the rain. Right out that door where Mother went.

My bare feet pound the wet mud. I can feel it squeezing between my toes as I run. I should have put some shoes on, because Mother doesn't like when I get the house dirty, but the man was right behind me. I can still feel him breathing on my back. I run harder and harder until I can only hear him screaming at me. He's far away now, and he sounds really angry.

I don't know where I'm running to. I just know I'm getting away from that house, and that man, and those shadows. I see Minnie up ahead through the trees. They look blurry in the rain like at the movies when the picture is about to go black. She's guiding me somewhere safe, I know it. She looks back at me as she runs, and she smiles at me with her shiny teeth. I try to smile, too. I keep on running until I forget I'm following her. Trees and trees and trees are all around me. Trees so big and dark they look like they might swallow me up, but no Minnie.

"Minnie!" I yell, but then I remember the man. I clasp my hands over my mouth and crouch down behind a tree. I make myself as tiny as possible, like a kitten, or something the man wouldn't want to hurt. I sit very still for a long time, listening for

sounds. All I hear are some birds twittering up in the branches and the rain plipping on the leaves. No footsteps or yelling.

Sitting there, I think about my daddy. I wish he was still alive to protect me and Mother from the bad men. My daddy was good. He was a soldier. I didn't see him much, but when he came home he always had stories to tell. Then one day Mother got a letter and she cried for a long time. I knew what it meant even without asking. That's what my Mother said an instinct is. She said she had an instinct even before she opened the letter. I guess we're pretty good at instincts. I try to use mine to keep that man from getting me.

After a long, long while I get the nerve to peek around the tree. Even though I only hear forest sounds, and my instinct says I'm alone, I'm afraid the man's face will be on the other side. I peek around real slow. Nothing but crunchy leaves, and trees, and a bumble bee flying to its house. I should get up then, before it's too late, I think. "Ouch!" My feet hurt when I stand up. I guess I was so busy running away I didn't realize my dress was torn. Thorns cut it up, and the bottom of my feet, too. Big teardrops make it hard for me to see anything around me, but I can't stay here, though. I wipe my eyes with my fists and see Minnie just ahead of me. She's being very patient. It's not like her to run away. She just got scared like me, that's all.

She looks at me with her warm eyes and starts wagging her bushy, brown tail. Then she turns and runs ahead. I keep on following Minnie's swishing tail as she weaves through the trees like Lassie. If I had to be alone in the forest, I at least want her with me. After a minute, her tail starts swishing more slowly, and her brown fur turns gold in the sunlight peeking through the wet leaves. I know where she's going now. It's an instinct. She took me to where we can cross the street to the little general store where Mother is. The thoughts of that man float right out of me, because I can even see the bright spot where the trees get thin. The little dirt road is just past it.

Minnie starts running faster again, right through the thin trees and into the open air, shimmering with mist. Finally out of the dark forest! Finally almost to Mother! I stand at the edge of the road and wait to cross over. When my eyes adjust to the light, though, it isn't a dirt road at all. It's a grey one. It's like the ones Mother showed me in the picture book. The ones in the big city. Even worse, the place where the general store should be is empty. It's like no store has ever been there at all.

"This isn't right, Minnie," I say. She wouldn't take me here. We must have gotten lost. When I look around for her, though, she's gone, too. Instead, a strange-looking blue car waits at the side of the road.

It's the man's car. I see his face, but it's too late to run again. My legs won't let me, and he grabs me, just like he wanted to all along. I scream and scream, until the inside of my throat feels like it's being ripped by the thorns just like my dress, and the man's rough hands squeeze tighter around my arms. He pulls me towards his car, and I can't even feel the ground on my sore feet anymore. Then he puts me in the back seat and locks the car and drives away fast.

A thin slit of light flutters between my eyelashes. My lids are heavy, like when I wake from a dream. When they finally open three people are in a room with me, but I can't see their faces because of the yellow glow all around them. Everything's so soft. Am I safe now? I'm floating, and it reminds me of when I was even smaller and Mother would rock me in her arms, cradled with soft white blankets that smelled like the honeysuckles I pick outside.

"Mother?"

"It's me," a voice says. A man's voice. He walks closer, and I see his face. It's the man! He looks down on me from where I'm curled up in a bed. I pull the thick, white covers up until they're covering my nose.

"It's okay, Mom. You're safe. We're here to take care of you," the man says.

Where is Mother? Where is Mother? I scream in my head, too afraid to open my mouth.

"We can't do it anymore, George," a different voice says to the man from the foot of the bed. She's an old woman with grey hair, a round, pink face.

"I wish we had another option. I just can't imagine Mom in one of those homes," the third person says with a soft voice. She sounds like Mother, and from what I can see in the light she looks like her, too.

"Mother?" I say, squinting at her.

Her lips smile but her eyes look sad like Mother's when she told me Daddy wasn't coming back. Without saying anything, she walks to the side of the bed and puts an open hand beside me.

She's not Mother. She's not Mother.

A picture in my head plays like an old movie reel, and in it I'm the mother and she's the baby. She's *my* baby.

"Lisa?" I say, grabbing her hand. I feel that I haven't seen her face in years, and now wrinkles crease the edges of her eyes. And her hair, warm and golden like the sun, is frosted with age.

I squeeze her hand and she squeezes back like she used to when she feared the monsters hiding in the dark corners of her warm, safe bedroom.

"I love you, Mom," she says with lips glistening with tears.

I can't find the words to express what's happening inside me. My heart, my brain.

The edges blur and distort into something unrecognizable. That lovely old movie reel warps with hideous stains and splotches. I feel it moving inside of my head, taking me to another mind. Another me.

My head feels heavy, like when I've been playing outside in the rain too long.

"Mother?" I ask. Mother is sitting on the bed with me. I knew she wouldn't be gone long! But her face looks sad, like when she told me Daddy was gone.

That's when I see them: a strange man and woman at the foot of my bed.

I gasp and my heart tries to jump from my chest.

"Mom, it's okay," the woman who looks like Mother says, putting her hands on my shoulders.

I have to get away from here. I have to get away!

Minnie is standing in the doorway waiting for me. I know she'll keep me safe. She always does.

American Samhain

By Gary Walton
Northern Kentucky University

The October rain has come cold
 And early on this Cabbage night,
 The penultimate ween before the

Hallow itself, an eve of All Souls
 Day of the Dead—the wind and
 Wet have forced the few orange and

Yellow leaves stubborn enough to
 Stay to love themselves in a
 Cascade of chaos and decrepitude—

The trees stand slick and black
 Like licorice sticks embarrassed
 And naked, bearing all with a

Creaking stoicism—here in the
 Gray twilight a ghostly fog rises
 Over mounds of mottled motley

Gathering at curbs mixing with
 Other memories like wandering
 Spirits who have come back

To lament the loss of the soft
 Sweet innocence of summer—
 We watch and know that we too

Are not young and shiver at the
 Thought of what is to come. Have
 We put enough aside to weather

The bitter months ahead? Can any
 Saving suffice? Haven't we been
 Fools to depend on delayed

Gratifications when time, like a
 Childhood legacy, was meant to be
 Spent, however winsomely, while

The blood was up and the sky
 Bright with innocent expectation—
 The freezing wisps of mist gather

On the porch and linger under the
 Windows like hungry urchins
 Searching for a way in to the fire

Or like spirits from the future
 Here to admonish us for our
 Recalcitrant complacency like

The ant clicking his tongue
 At the still fiddling grasshopper—
 Yet, what can we do but shiver

And wait, knowing that winter
 At last comes to us all.

Solid Truths

By Gary Walton
Northern Kentucky University

First bliss, then laundry
Is an old Zen koan
And as true as any

Spiritual meme set to
Define expectation—but
What we need is to find

Bliss *in* laundry, like
Sisyphus rolling that
Damned rock up a

Mountain, forever shoulder
To wheel, but not cursed
In Camus' telling, free

Because he scorns the
Gods who condemned him—
Yet, that is the freedom,

If not the foundation, of
Irony and it *may* be
The most valuable commodity

In the universe—but
What if we could love the rock
Itself, dig it, for its *isness*

And for that friction of
Scapula to stone, the
Kinesis of human endeavor,

And the oneness of thing and
Mind—to embrace the boulder
And the mountain and the sky

And the sun with a heart
Beating, moment to moment
Conscious of its own labor—

Surely, this is the rising
The rhythmic road to nirvana.

Living in the Liminal

By Gary Walton
Northern Kentucky University

Managing the margins,
Writing in the cracks

Between the this and that—
The alarm clock, breakfast—

The gimcrack lure of the
Quotidian moment—the

Call of the necessary—
Like the waning Gibbous moon

We find we fall away from our
Fullest moment; becoming

Thus done, meaning has
Devolved into habit—

Why delay gratification
Like sinners waiting for the

Call? Something is about to
Give like a glacier calving

Into the sea or the cracking
Of a load bearing beam—

We can't quite see it, like a
Mote at the edge of our vision

But we feel the shiver, the *frisson*—
What we need now is simple:

Shelter from the inevitable
Storm.

2021 Presidential Address: Adopting a Responsibility of Care

By Dominic Ashby

Eastern Kentucky University

As a scholar of rhetoric and composition, I spend a lot of energy thinking about kairos. Literally “timeliness,” or “the right moment,” kairos is a key part of any rhetorical situation, whether written or spoken; it is as important for analysis of literary and historical texts as it is planning a presentation, a course lecture, or an email. I teach students to think about kairos for their compositions and consider it in my own work.

Considering the kairos of our present situation as scholars, teachers, and writers, we are faced with numerous extraordinary circumstances that shape our daily lives and work in ways I do not believe any of us anticipated a year ago at the 2020 KPA conference.

The social distancing necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic defines much of the present moment: online or hybrid classes; writing classrooms where we can’t sit next to students to help them with their work; reduced enrollments; canceled classes; offices largely empty, where we no longer have chances to chat with colleagues in the hall, the break room, or at the copy machine; neighbors, friends, and family whom we may not have seen face-to-face for months; days where a simple trip to the grocery store is fraught with worry about the risk of exposing ourselves or our family and loved ones to disease.

The stressors of the COVID-19 pandemic on our public and private lives and on our work—including whether we even *have* work or steady employment—have brought other problematic elements of early 21st-century life into starker focus. Political partisanship and antagonism at the national level; systemic racism and police brutality including the tragic killing of Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky on March 13, 2020; the displays of protest against these ongoing injustices; and the politicizing of the health crisis that is the pandemic.

In Kentucky we have seen budget crises continue to shake higher education—performance-based funding, an under-funded state retirement system, and legislators’ plans for addressing those shortfalls by putting the responsibility on institutions, coupled with drops in enrollment and retention at many institutions, leave many of us feeling financially vulnerable, uncertain about the future of our chosen careers.

The days and weeks following the 2020 KPA saw many of us shift to teaching online or hybrid. Some institutions like Berea College canceled classes entirely for the semester out of concern for the health and well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Our meetings have moved to Zoom, Google Meet, Teams, and other mediated, online environments. Many of us have had to learn to adapt to delivering our classes through a combination of instructional videos, live video feed, and LMS

announcements. Many of us saw too many of our students struggle with the shift to online, as disparities in internet access in the commonwealth came once again to light. How many of you had or have students who drive to Starbucks' or McDonalds' parking lots to get free WIFI? Students who had to share a single computer with parents and younger siblings, all of whom had to do work online throughout the day?

In short, the kairos of our current situation has forced us to live and work at a greater remove from each other, from our friends, colleagues, families, students, and neighbors.

Ours is also a kairos that draws attention to, or allows us to consider, our responsibilities. The question of responsibility is certainly one that comes up again and again on the national and local stage: how should a responsible political leader behave? What are our responsibilities to one another within a community? What do we owe one another? What responsibility do we each bear to protect those around us from an airborne disease? What responsibility do we have to those wronged by social, financial, or judicial systems that regularly exclude, maim, or kill some members of society—such as people of color and LGBTQ+ youth—while others—often white, middle class—benefit?

We are left in positions of having to consider our responsibilities to our jobs, colleagues, clients, students, and to our families, friends, and other loved ones. The pandemic has made the choice to physically go to work or to the grocery store not just a personal choice, but a choice that has ramifications to multiple networks of those around us.

Many of us have had new responsibilities forced upon us. The responsibility to adapt to a changed workplace where we often cannot see each other face-to-face but have to work digitally, at a distance. With our own institutions facing greater financial strain and so many of our students facing greater financial hardships, we may feel a responsibility to cut costs. Many of our responsibilities may not be new, but may be changed or made more immediate.

The responsibility to advise, mentor, and prepare our students for a career search is made weightier and more difficult, as students struggle more manifestly with mental health, financial stress, and an uncertain job market. Our students struggle with food insecurity, with balancing work with classes. These struggles are not new for many of our students, but the current situation has pushed these issues even more into the open, has affected more, led more closer to that line between what they can and cannot reasonably handle—more of them need our help, and with limited opportunities to reach out to others, teachers, advisors, and mentors may suddenly find themselves being asked to help our students handle challenges we feel inadequately prepared to address.

While we have had to adapt our teaching to online or hybrid modes, students also struggle with adapting to online learning. Many—far too many, especially in Eastern Kentucky—continue to struggle with access to reliable internet and decent computers. Too many remain on the wrong side of the digital divide.

Together, these and many other responsibilities we face can be staggering. Socially distanced as we are, many of us have a reduced support network to maintain our own resilience. In this moment, it is tempting to hunker down and keep many of these responsibilities at a distance, too. And some days, that's all we can do, and on those days, that's ok.

But I urge us to respond to the present moment, to our kairos, by adopting a responsibility to care.

We have a responsibility to care, even and especially when we feel isolated and scared, when we want to withdraw into our shells—those personal, professional, and

institutional shells that might feel safer than engaging. Yet, we cannot simply withdraw and hope that the world will look better next semester or next year; the stressors of the pandemic may throw them into sharper relief, but many of the challenges we and those around us face were already here long before, and they will continue after. Other new challenges and changes necessitated by social isolation will continue as well. How we conduct classes, the number of online classes our programs offer, how we hold meetings, and many day-to-day practices that were forced to change in response to the pandemic are likely to remain different even after the threat of COVID-19 subsides. Many of these may be changes we have little choice but to move along with.

For the small parts of our world we can exert influence on, how might we make that space better? More just? How can we meet our responsibilities as citizens? As educators? As beneficiaries of and representatives of higher education? As human beings?

The pandemic has highlighted the need for both self-care and care for others. In our institutions we see our students and colleagues struggle, even suffer. We face our own struggles and suffering more fully, as we work through and from positions of greater physical and social isolation. My hope is that we can focus more fully on care and use it as an antidote to isolation, defensiveness, and hopelessness. We need to find ways to care and be responsible while also renewing and refreshing ourselves.

Let's choose to approach our responsibilities in ways that can make a positive change, to support the values we feel committed to. What these commitments might be will vary for each of us. From my own experience as a scholar, teacher, and program coordinator, two areas I have a strong responsibility of care for are promoting access and developing inclusive, anti-racist pedagogy. Let's start with access.

The pandemic and social distancing have highlighted the already-existing challenges to access present in many institutions of higher education. This begins with admissions and placement. Social distancing has made it more difficult for students to take standardized tests such as the ACT. Many institutions in Kentucky have had to find alternative ways to determine admission and placement, including waiving test requirements and turning to other measures for placement in general education courses such as First-Year Composition and Math. In so doing, schools have put the spotlight back on the enduring question: just how useful are national standardized tests anyway?

At ECU, this shift has coincided with a decision to expand admission benchmarks and placement of more and more students into our corequisite English and Math courses. To give some context: Corequisite English at ECU has been a success story in terms of increasing access for students; as four-hour, credit-bearing courses that satisfy both the first-year writing gen-ed requirement and remedial reading and English requirement, our ENG 101R and ENG 102R courses keep students who did not meet testing benchmarks of ACT 18 for English or 20 for Reading on track to graduation on the same timeframe as their standard-admit peers. The extended credit hours, lowered course caps (18 instead of 25—still larger than what the NCTE recommends for such classes, but we'll take what we can get), and additional support in the form of course-embedded consultants (who are near-peer tutors trained by our writing and communication center, the Noel Studio) all combine to provide the added support needed to give these students a greater rate of success in college courses than the previous curriculum of no-credit developmental courses followed by enrollment into first-year composition later—often as sophomores—ever did. That is, we've had some experience with expanding access

by giving more students the opportunity to attend and succeed, to perform beyond the expectations set by their standardized test results (for more information about ECU's Corequisite program, see Bosely et al.).

In the two years prior to the pandemic we had been bringing in students with scores as low as ACT 12 in English and Reading, and placing them in ENG 101R and 102R, paired with learning communities and a learning contract. Wrap-around support provided by the combination of the extra support of our R course model and paired learning communities with GSD 101, ECU's first-year experience course, has led to students in the 2019 cohort being retained to fall 2020 at 60.3%—an increase of 22.2% over the previous year for this same population. Many of these students would not have had the opportunity to enroll at a four-year institution without this program.

With such a system already in place, ECU has been more prepared to support students with a wide range of high-school preparation. The new challenge we face for Fall 2021 is an increase in the number of students with no placement scores—in Fall 2020, many still had their ACT test scores from their Junior year. In anticipation of this, my colleague Dr. Jill Parrott, who is the coordinator for First Year Composition, and I, along with input from the office of testing and placement, and from student mentors and tutors in the Noel Studio and the ECU Gurus, developed a Directed Self Placement (DSP) document to be used by students entering ECU with no placement scores. The DSP asks students to rank their writing and reading experiences and preparation across 8 areas, with rankings from 1 to 4. Based on this self-assessment, students are recommended to place into either corequisite ENG 101R, or vanilla ENG 101. Students whose responses put them into the grey area between the two are asked to meet with an advisor from the Department of English to help them decide which option is best for their needs. Students who disagree with the score-based recommendation to take ENG 101 or ENG 101R can also request to meet with an English advisor.

In designing the DSP, we were excited by the opportunity to move placement for English away from standardized tests and towards a mode of placement that directly involves students in the decision. The growing body of research on use of DSPs in both four-year and community college settings across the country indicates that they lead to more accurate placement and to greater student buy-in and satisfaction with the course they place into. In a survey of research on DSP from 1998 to 2019, Andrew Moos and Kathryn Van Zanen identify several trends, including that students placed through DSP “feel less resentment about writing requirements” (68) and have improved retention rates; they also note that research shows DSP to be more effective at “guiding marginalized students through the FYW [First-Year Writing] curriculum” (68) than traditional measures of GPA and ACT/SAT test scores. Christie Toth, in a study surveying the results of the use of DSP in 7 different Community College settings, found that at these institutions, students did not over-place themselves; as Toth put it, “Importantly, *none* saw evidence that students were systematically over-placing themselves in ways that undermined their persistence—a finding in line with DSP outcomes reported at four-year institutions.”

Overall, the research on DSP shows that students are more satisfied with their placement when it is done by DSP rather than by test score—especially students who place into developmental, remedial, or co-requisite courses, and that they are not over-placing themselves into classes above where they can succeed. Added to the long history of criticisms of the efficacy of standardized tests for placement, especially for English and writing, moving to a DSP has been a change many of us

already wanted to see; at EKU, the pandemic has brought with it the kairos needed to nudge more people towards being willing to accept it as a viable approach.

As I acknowledge previously, the digital divide is another barrier to access for many—including our students and ourselves. The pandemic and the need to shift towards more online teaching and learning has drawn attention to the great disparities in preparation and access: disparities in the practical aspects of using tools like Zoom, Google Drive, and the features of our institutions' Learning Management Systems, and disparities in managing the analytical side of digital literacies such as critical reading of electronic texts and the knowledge of how reading and engagement differ for digital works. Many of us have found ourselves pushed into situations where we have been expected to pick up such tools and skills very rapidly, with varying, often inconsistent levels of institutional support and training. Our students, despite the current generation of traditional students being labeled as "digital natives," are often easily overwhelmed by the tools we assume they'll be familiar and comfortable with. Familiarity with texting and downloading smart phone apps that serve very specific, focused purposes does not necessarily translate over to familiarity with the complexities of productivity software like Google docs; where Snapchat makes communication simple, our learning management systems are by comparison arcane and difficult to navigate. Many of our students need a significant amount of guidance and training to succeed in online or even hybrid classrooms. Whether shifting to teaching fully or partially online, we need to acknowledge that many tasks that seem straightforward in the face-to-face classroom may take significantly more time—for us and for our students. We need to be fair and kind to ourselves and to our students and adjust accordingly—success this year may look very different from what success looks like in a different semester.

As many of us have found, the challenges for online or hybrid teaching don't end here. In preparing for this year's online KPA, the planning committee, especially Craig and Rebecca, put a lot of thought into ways of ensuring that the greatest number of our members could still attend and participate. A significant part of that calculation rested in challenges of access to quality, reliable internet. Consistent connections and consistent speeds are not a guarantee in many parts of the commonwealth of Kentucky, a problem faced by many of our students. Storms, floods, accidents, a neighbor's overzealous tree-trimming, an errant backhoe—these and more can bring down access even in areas that usually have it. For this reason, we need to remain flexible and give students more opportunities and chances to complete and submit their work.

Again, not one of these challenges facing online teaching or instruction that makes use of digital tools is limited to this pandemic year. Students and instructors have long faced these issues—we are simply seeing them to a greater degree now that we're all spending more time online. It is worthwhile to rethink our teaching and to explore new tools, even if we teach or hope to return to teaching face-to-face. Digital reading, writing, and meaning making are permanent parts of our culture. Thinking about technology needs to involve more than just introducing new tools to the mix; it must also include attention to changes digital technology means for literacy, for our reading, writing, communicating processes.

In 1998, rhetoric and composition scholar Cynthia Selfe addressed our responsibility passionately in her Conference on College Composition and Curriculum (CCCC) chair's address, pointing to a responsibility still only partially met 20+ years later. She writes:

I believe composition studies faculty have a much larger and more complicated obligation to fulfill—that of trying to understand and make sense of, to *pay attention* to, how technology is now inextricably linked to literacy and literacy education in this country . . . *we have to pay attention to technology*. When we fail to do so, we share in the responsibility for sustaining and reproducing an unfair system that . . . enacts social violence and ensures continuing illiteracy under the aegis of education. (1165–66)

[And, this reminds me of Karen and Willie’s talk earlier this morning, which in part addressed the need for greater nuance and context in online communication, such as the use of memes in online forums.]

The pandemic has also brought into relief the financial barriers many of our students face. While we may not have a say in the costs of tuition, room and board, and other fees, each of us who teaches can influence the cost of an education through our choice of texts and other materials required for our courses. The cost of textbooks continues to increase and presents a significant barrier to many students. We have multiple avenues to alleviate this financial burden; while many of us already choose lower-cost textbooks or older editions, moving to free materials is even better. For our upper-division courses, readings from our disciplines’ academic and professional journals are one option. Open Access textbooks are another. For writing-focused courses, the WAC Clearinghouse provides a number of Creative Commons license texts that range from scholarly, peer-reviewed publications to textbooks for first-year writing, available free for download as well as in-print at a low cost. At my own institution, many faculty and programs are turning to Open Education Resources or OERs as an option to provide students with quality, free textbooks. The Hewlett Foundation defines Open Education Resources as “teaching, learning and research materials in any medium—digital or otherwise—that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions” (Open Education Resources).

The beauty of OERs lies in their adaptability—because they can be modified, existing OER resources can be localized and adapted to fit a program or institutions’ needs, then shared again for others to use. Evidence suggests that students are often more engaged in classes that use OERs, in part because all the students have access to the texts; OERs that are created by faculty at the institution are even more appreciated by students, both because they forge better links to the local curriculum, and because they reinforce the notion of local instructors as not just experts, but caring experts who are taking students’ financial situations seriously.

EKU’s first year writing program is developing an OER textbook for ENG 101 and 101R, to be piloted next year and fully rolled out for Fall 2022. Spearheaded by Dr. Jill Parrott and myself, this OER will include readings from the public domain and materials created by EKU English faculty and graduate students; it will include samples from EKU students, and the assignments and activities will specifically align with EKU’s First Year Writing outcomes. This and other OER resources from EKU are available at www.encompass.eku.edu/ekuopen.

Developing an OER can also create opportunities for professionalization for students; in our case, we’re using funds from a Board of Regents development grant to hire a graduate TA as the assistant editor for the textbook.

Again, lowering the cost of textbooks for students—and even better, finding ways to provide quality content for free, such as by using OERs—are worthwhile causes responding to barriers faced by students that predate the pandemic; but the financial strain faced by many students makes it more urgent.

Access also ties to another responsibility of care: inclusive, anti-racist pedagogy. This consists of not just opening doors for more students, but also making sure all feel welcome, seen, heard, and included. Too often, this responsibility has not been met.

2020 highlighted again and again the presence of systemic racism within and across many institutions in the United States. Higher education is certainly not immune; further, it is one of the spaces where systemic racism can be discussed and addressed. As others have already done, in making this call to address systemic racism I am not accusing anyone here of being purposefully racist; rather, I want us to acknowledge that we, as educators, participate in and benefit from a system that is racist, that unfairly benefits members of some groups (usually white, middle-class) while making life difficult, at times unbearable, or even outright harmful to members of other groups.

Staying with my own area of expertise, I'll focus on writing and rhetoric. As Asao Inoue points out, writing classes are racist when they reward students for adherence to a way of writing and communicating that aligns with one group's standard way of speaking, writing, and communicating. He writes:

We know that students come to us from very different educational systems that do not equally prepare them. We know that we judge the quality of writing in most writing courses by a white, middle-class standard, one not native to the poor, the working classes, or many students of color. We know that our students have no control over any of these factors in their lives, and yet we still say that judging writing quality, particularly for a course grade, is fair. My ideal course says that it is not fair, nor does it help students learn better reading and writing practices. My students deserve better. (Theorizing Failure 92)

These concerns can be extended beyond constructions of race to include many ways of being that are excluded from the "norm" assumed by much of our educational system, including assumptions about physical ability and neurotypicality. Strategies that can be used to create antiracist classrooms can also align with universal design. In my own teaching, building towards a more inclusive, antiracist classroom starts with changing how I grade—in my case, through the use of a grade contract, though this is certainly not the only approach.

As Inoue argues, choice of assessment paradigm is key to the inclusive character of a classroom:

It is often believed falsely that grading is just an institutional necessity, something we can ask students to ignore, at least while they are learning. But to attempt to do that is to ignore the way grades work in classrooms, how they shape many aspects of the entire ecology, how they influence students' and teachers' actions. Not thinking of assessment first, or at least simultaneously with pedagogy, is a mistake. And our students who do not already come to us embodying a dominant English will pay for it, even when our intentions are to help those very students. (Labor Based 4)

Put another way, if the content of a course is inclusive and open but student work is assessed in a way that reinforces a dichotomy between students who fit white, middle-class, ableist standards on the one hand and those who don't on the other, there's a problem.

A labor-based grade contract can level the playing field and be more flexible to reward multiple forms of success. For folks interested in using grade contracts, there

are a lot of resources out there, including Inoue's 2019 free book mentioned above; I have a short piece in the 2019 Pedagogicon Proceedings, available online.

But changes in grading alone aren't enough, although they can drastically change a class. Assignments, readings, discussions, and other parts of our classes should also always be rethought with an eye towards inclusiveness. Many of you here at this conference have shared, again and again, many innovative ways that you make your classes inclusive, welcoming, and relevant spaces. We all must keep examining our classroom and research practices to keep them fresh; and we have so much we can learn from each other, both in terms of specific practices to try, as well as heuristics for regularly checking and rethinking what we do to ensure that we're meeting our own goals of inclusion.

I've laid out many responsibilities of care for others, primarily focusing on care for our students. To support this, we need to make sure we're also addressing care and support for ourselves and our colleagues. Teaching evaluations, promotion and tenure, consideration for course releases—all these should take into account the extra time and effort needed to transition to effective online or hybrid teaching. Faculty who take the time and effort to innovate should be recognized and rewarded. Successful teaching during this time has to look different, and measures of successful teaching, service, and research or creative production should adapt as well. We should all continue to look for ways to collaborate and share ideas and resources—not only does this share knowledge and drive innovations in teaching, but it lightens the burden.

As I prepared for this presentation, and now as I come to the end of my address, I found it difficult to find a way to tidily draw to a close. After all, what's driving this talk, the kairos of the pandemic, the many ongoing challenges that stretch from before and continue beyond the hoped-for end to the pandemic—none of these have come to a close, either. To borrow from Donna Haraway, we have to stay with the trouble. We're in a complicated, messy world. The pandemic has forced those of us who may often have the luxury to ignore the trouble, the mess, to see it. To share in the discomfort, the fear, the pain that many others feel on a regular basis. Let's opt not to turn away from that, but to stay with it. To find ways to build an ethics and responsibility of care. Not to give up, or to self-blame, or to hide; and not to wait and see or leave it up to others; but to find those ways that we as individuals, or programs, or departments can make the world a little more equitable for those we can reach. Here, now, in the midst of this trouble. Thank you, and take care!

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Creating a Post-secondary Bridge in the Commonwealth by Reading Across the Curriculum

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The legislature's recent decision to address college readiness in corequisite coursework, not remedial education,¹ has caused colleges and universities throughout Kentucky to more seriously contend with collegiate level reading. The important skill, long conflated with an ACT target score alone, must now be addressed in the general education core, as worthy of substantive credit as oral and written communication or mathematical reasoning.

Admittedly, this legislation is only one instance of a series of wide-ranging educational efforts to solve a longstanding problem: how to teach reading. Some sixty-five years after Rudolf Flesch asked *Why Johnny Can't Read*, and over three decades after the start of the so-called "reading wars," which pitted phonics against whole-language learning, national reading scores remain stagnant. Here in the Commonwealth, they are even showing troubling signs of decline.² Realistically, there is no guarantee that the corequisite effort will make a meaningful impact on its own: the administration at my school, for example, has treated the requirement as yet another box to check as the institution scrambles to prove performance via paper results.³ But the legislative mandate that schools address reading readiness in a collegiate level course does offer a rare opportunity for those of us in traditional fields predicated on exegesis—literature, philosophy, political science, and history—to stress the importance of deep reading skills in all areas of study.

The same readiness standards that certify a student's ability to read college-level textbooks (which may only be written at an 8th grade level) also signal that a student is prepared to begin meaningful engagement with more complex texts.⁴ Although we rarely phrase it in this way, we consider a person's ability to comprehend and utilize advanced texts the "value-add" of collegiate-level training, which is why we expect a well-prepared chemistry graduate to be able to read a peer-reviewed article in a top journal just as effectively as an introductory textbook, we presume a university-trained ceramicist should be able to scan an artist statement and process the form and content therein in much the same way as a work of visual art, and we hope an educated sociologist would be able to accurately summarize the theories of Max Weber after reading a collection of his essays. The legislature's move to a corequisite model for remedial education finally gives actual credit to the uncredited skill we have taken for granted for too long: reading.

The legislative move is not without potential dangers, as my institution demonstrates. The legislation only requires institutionally defined evidence efforts have been made, providing already burdened institutions latent incentive to gloss over issues and shield themselves from blame. Furthermore, even the colleges and

universities that offer the very best corequisite classes taught under the most optimal circumstances will continue to grapple with reading readiness for quite some time because the problem is so widespread and systemic. The opportunity here is not to generate a quick-fix solution that will truly solve reading readiness once and for all in Kentucky (an impossible task), but the chance to begin a cultural and curricular shift that will allow us to collectively define and prioritize college-level reading. As Robert Scholes noted almost twenty years ago, we overlook many of our students' problems (and hence cut out many potential solutions) because college curricula as a whole do not "see" reading (166). Corequisite education has caused reading to be "seen," at least at the point of entry, for all students and degrees. Those of us engaged in exegetical disciplines can use this recognition to start conversations that can enshrine deep and intensive reading across the curriculum.⁵

These conversations are necessary because reading is a problem for all college students, not just those deemed to have trouble with reading readiness. We know, from classroom experience and normed surveys, like the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), that students are often not reading what we assign them.⁶ There are various reasons for this lack of compliance, but when faculty just hope the problem will be taken care of elsewhere, provide obligatory study guides, or walk through the material they assume students have tried to read and cannot understand, they obviate the need to address any of those reasons. This is unfortunate because a number of students who elect not to read actually have access to texts and the ability to process much of what is in them. When we provide easy outs because we think we are meeting students "where they are," we are not offering real help to either the students fully capable of comprehension or those who struggle to read intensively with purpose. As Mark Bauerlein has noted, we are instead suggesting that we believe students in general are "too dumb for complex texts."

Those of us who spend our professional lives engaging with complex texts, completing research that is intensive reading, can help our colleagues see what is so often overlooked in discussions of content awareness, or problems with communication skills—that inadequate reading is the true source of obvious student problems at the collegiate level. As Laura J. Davis argues, "[c]onversations about student writing issues and/or students' lack of content knowledge at an institutional level need to be reframed and focused on students' reading practices. More often than not, these issues, ranging from shallow understanding of course content to student plagiarism, are symptoms of students' weak reading skills" (179). If students are, in the memorable phrase of my colleague, Dr. Katy Carlson, merely "watching words go by," and not processing readings in a way that allows them to extract accurate information from the texts they are expected to access, they will fail to learn what those readings could provide them and default to patchwork writing⁷ when they attempt to utilize the sources they are given.

The good news is that instructors across the curriculum can improve their students' reading practices by effectively incorporating assigned written materials in ways that will reinforce course content. And this improvement will not require those instructors to "give up" precious class time in order to make room for reading because advanced reading (and reading instruction) is predicated on domain knowledge. Evidence-based instructional practices require teachers to offer comprehension strategies alongside—never before or in lieu of—content because focusing on "reading" as an abstract skill divorced from the particular text is antithetical to comprehension building. As E. D. Hirsch argues, "[t]he point of a comprehension strategy is to activate the student's relevant knowledge in order to construct a situation model" (22). If the component parts for that situational model are missing—"if the relevant prior knowledge is lacking"—"conscious

comprehension strategies cannot activate it” (22). This contention is as true today as it was in 2003, when Hirsch’s article was published, and applies to students in college just as surely as it does to those in the 4th grade. Emphasizing deep reading in the college classroom is emphasizing content, and this emphasis, in the long run, can save instructor time and energy by facilitating compliance in terms of reading assignments and offering avenues for assessment that can be authentically measured through objective means (that can themselves be graded mechanically).

Motivated faculty in exegetical disciplines now have a platform from which we can advocate for reading awareness, allowing us to work collaboratively with our fellow educators to demonstrate how texted-based approaches can function in other areas and disciplines. Reading across the curriculum is a skill that can be seamlessly integrated in easily assessable measures that focus on the content the instructor was already covering.⁸ And potential practitioners in the Commonwealth can draw on already established efforts of pioneers, such as Alison Horning, who have already done much to address the issue of college reading. All of the essays in *What is College Reading?*, for example, offer invaluable advice while they acknowledge what cognitive science has confirmed: words on the page only convey meaning if readers have encountered them before, and if the words’ specific usage either conforms to common definitions or relies on an application with which the reader is familiar.⁹ What we can and should stress: fostering literacy in the college classroom actually mandates attention to discipline-specific terminology. It also demands an awareness of fundamental propositions and facts. In many ways, providing proper context for advanced readings is tantamount to outlining standard methodologies in the field. Reinforcing reading baselines, which would include buttressing general points of reference academic readers need to share across disciplines and areas, is teaching the content.

Admittedly, providing complementary strategies for quickly identifying and effectively navigating the genres commonly used in the field will add a metatextual level of instruction to classes that is not exclusively content based. This skill building, though, will remind students they are encountering the same type of artifact in different classes for a reason while it allows them to “crack the codes” they need to know to successfully gather information on their own. This is why targeted reading instruction is one of the areas wherein we can demonstrate the pedagogical value of rethinking remediation. Taking time to help students navigate the format of a standard textbook is far from a waste of time if we can get the students to actually read and use the required course material. What we need to remember is that many good students are a bit flummoxed by indexes, fail to see the full significance of titles and headings, and wait for PowerPoints or study guides to direct them to what is significant in the text.¹⁰ We would actually allow more students to become architects of their own education, and show our fellow faculty all the time they could save generating explanatory material, if we diverted pedagogical energy from simplifications that provide shortcuts for students toward strategies that ensure reading accountability.

So how do we get to a place of accountability, where we can help our colleagues throughout the Commonwealth craft a meaningful bridge of reading across the curriculum that they and their students can walk across?

1. Adopt an institution-wide definition of college-level reading.
 - Consult the ACT definition of “complex” texts and consider the potential usefulness of “readability” scores (such as the Flesch-Kincaid formula or Lexile measures), while focusing on the essential texts faculty in particular fields designate.

- Draw on the scholarly work already done to define college-level reading (such as Horning's), making a concerted effort to show how this applies to the disciplinary needs of faculty in professional, technical, and performance areas.
 - Prioritize prose literacy.¹¹
2. Codify reading outcomes throughout the curriculum.
- Assess the institution's General Education student learning outcome regarding reading in every General Education course save core mathematics, which already bears the responsibility for mathematical reasoning, and often remains the only course within which college-level students are given explicit instruction in quantitative literacy.
 - Encourage faculty within disciplines to determine common core or essential works of prose that their students should study in majors and areas.
3. Provide aid for meaningful reading instruction.
- Offer faculty tips, strategies, and advice for seamlessly integrating reading instruction within disciplines or areas. (This aid must be practicable—tailored to the genres common in the discipline/field.)
 - Privilege strategies that facilitate deep reading that produces comprehension.
 - Collaborate with institutional librarians to ensure broad access to the essential works of prose.
 - Work with testing centers, assessment offices, and learning management system (LMS) coordinators to craft objective forms of assessment. (Faculty will be more willing to integrate this important skill if the skill will not add an undue assessment burden to their extant workload.)
4. Position P-16 initiatives (the integration of student experience from preschool to high school, and college) as a form of uplift.
- Acknowledge that deep reading in disciplines is a skill that will always need to be cultivated at the collegiate level because the skill is reliant on the content faculty provide. (Advanced reading instruction is not just remediation of previous deficits.)
 - Recognize that we can help end pedagogic “wars” by promoting the science of learning in legislative sessions and our own Colleges of Education.
 - Remind ourselves that students' reading ability is enhanced when they are strategically introduced to complex works that are “above” their reading level (and stagnates when they are only ever provided with lower-level texts or given shortcuts that allow them to disengage from reading altogether).

Interested faculty persons from any discipline can even begin integrating reading instruction in their college classroom before any institution-wide (or statewide) initiative is in place. Admittedly, later suggestions may require the aid of reading specialists to be fully enacted, but every instructor can begin to:

1. Clearly differentiate reading compliance from reading comprehension.

- Do not present the recall of certain passages, facts, or ideas as comprehension of a reading. Distinguish a memory exercise from mastery of written material.
2. Rethink the use of reflection essays or response papers for reading assessment.
 - Any written assignment that merely elicits what a student thought about a reading is assessing the student's opinion(s). Student responses and reflections can be gathered in class discussion.
 - Reading compliance can be gauged in simple quizzes.
 - Graded papers should always address source usage and engage with students' syntax, method of organization, and style.
 3. Encourage "text-to-text" and "text-to-world" connections.
 - "Text-to-self" connections can capture student interest, but they do not, in and of themselves, lead to meaningful engagement or informed analysis.¹² "Text-to-text" and "text-to-world" connections build disciplinary or interdisciplinary connections.
 4. Require at least one complex text in mandated reading.
 - Complex texts do not need to be long, literary, or canonical. They just need to be continuous works of prose that present important content, preferably for scholars in the field.
 - Provide students with the necessary context for the specific reading, offering a clear and explicit connection to the course content, and devote at least one class period to collectively reading at least a portion of the text.
 5. Focus on genre.
 - Highlight the genres/forms that are prevalent in your discipline or area. Remind students that they will see these same structures in other courses devoted to the same discipline/area of study.
 - Explicitly identify the formal structure of the readings you assign.
 - Offer students advice on how to navigate this structure.

We all have the ability to make a positive impact on campus right now, using the shift to corequisite education as a way to address collegiate-level reading. Individual faculty can begin important work fostering this skill before institutional drives and efforts, important work that will only aid widespread adoption by showcasing the benefits of embedded reading instruction. The legislature's recent decision does not just lay down a mandate; it provides a unique opportunity for colleges and universities to offer more meaningful help to students without adding undue burden on instructors who are expected to do more with less.

Notes

¹ The specification is outlined in 13 KAR 2:020, section 7.1, which states: "A student demonstrating academic readiness shall be placed in credit-bearing courses in their respective curriculum pathway. The student shall not be required to enroll in a developmental course. Policies and College readiness standards are available on the CPE website: www.cpe.ky.gov/ourwork/developmentaleducation.html.

² In 2018, the Pritchard Committee, a non-partisan group that works to foster accountability and create opportunity in K-12 education in the state, issued an urgent warning, urging schools to address a precipitous decline in reading scores. The School Report Card electronic database, available on the Kentucky Department of Education site, continues to reflect the fact that the middling achievement of our 4th grade students in reading is still superior to that of our 8th graders, who fare worse in normed assessments.

³ Morehead State's administration added reading enhancement to the freshman "seminar" the Assistant Provost and President refashioned into a student success orientation course to be taught by staff. The solitary week devoted to reading in the scripted course refutes all best practices by providing students with an undifferentiated list of abstract reading strategies and tips, not the specific help, grounded in domain knowledge, they require to efficiently decode texts. Even worse, the students taking the enhanced version are given extra assignments, all in the name of added help. This additional workload, which places a greater burden on "at risk" students, does not even ensure skill acquisition. The retrofitted grading scale in the enhanced version allows students to pass the class in general without earning passing credit (or demonstrating real competence) in the reading portion.

⁴ In "Reading Between the Lines," the ACT puts forward a working description of a complex text with six key aspects: complex relationships among ideas or characters (relationships); sophisticated information offered through literary devices or data representations (richness); a complex or highly unconventional organization (structure); "intricate" use of tone or language (style); demanding word choice (vocabulary); and a purpose or intent that is implied or possibly ambiguous (purpose).

⁵ As the National Endowment for the Arts most recent study, *Reading on the Rise*, attests, noticing the issue is always the first step toward solving the problem. In the Preface, Chairman Gioia states his "agency was criticized by some for publicizing the alarming national survey results [in *Reading at Risk*, 2004]. Our belief, then and now, was that the first step towards solving a problem was to identify and understand it. *Reading on the Rise* has demonstrated that our faith in positive social and cultural change was not misplaced."

⁶ According to the most recent NSSE data, the mean number of weekly hours spent reading and prepping for class is 13-15. That self-reported number is the total for all classes. And there is no guarantee that this time includes actually reading assigned texts. Lori K. Garrett's *The Art of Teaching A&P* provides a succinct overview of the scholarship on student literacy, scholarship that overwhelmingly demonstrates that students avoid or do not comprehend the importance or value of textbooks.

⁷ For more on this phenomenon, see Howard, Serviss, and Rodrigue's 2010 article in *Writing & Pedagogy*, "Writing from Sources, Writing from Sentences." For a good general overview, see Miriam-Webster's "Words We're Watching" entry on their website: "'Patchwriting'—Paraphrasing in a cut-and-paste world."

⁸ As Lousia C. Moats notes in *American Educator*, "[i]nterpretive strategies that facilitate comprehension—including summarizing, questioning, predicting outcomes, and monitoring one's own understanding—are best used in the service of learning defined curricular content" (para. 20).

⁹ These points have also been conveyed in the popular press. While one "component of reading . . . involves decoding, or making connections between sounds and the letters that represent them," the problem, as Natalie Wexler notes in "Why American Students Haven't Gotten Better at Reading in 20 Years," is that "educators have also treated the other component of reading—comprehension—as a

set of skills, when in fact it depends primarily on what readers already know” (para. 9).

¹⁰ Thomas Berry et al. identify textbook usage—or lack thereof—as a barrier to success for college students. The literature review provided in “An Explanatory Analysis of Textbook Usage and Study Habits” demonstrates how well documented problems with reading compliance are, and the article’s original contribution is to identify root causes so that instructors can effectively address underlying issues.

¹¹ All forms of literacy are obviously important, but general calls for “literacy instruction,” like shifts to “language arts” in K-12, have tended to deemphasize prose literacy in general and the study of complex texts. Complex texts in technical and scientific fields will no doubt contain documents (maps, tables, forms) that professionals in the field need to comprehend, but that does not mean that collegiate level reading overall should be equated with document literacy, or appeals to visual literacy, or other forms of media analysis.

¹² As David A. Jolliffe and Allison Harl contend in “Texts of Our Institutional Lives: Studying the ‘Reading Transition’ from High School to College: What are our Students Reading, and Why?,” “students ultimately need to be stretched beyond the boundaries of their own personal reactions” through exercises that move toward full comprehension (p. 613).

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Smarter than your Average Bear: Blurring the Lines between Animal and Master in French Canadian Literature

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Canadian literature has long featured the bear, a highly recognizable and symbolic figure¹ that transitions between rural and urban settings, between the wild and the tame in its many literary incarnations. The relationship between human and bear is heightened by physical likenesses, including walking upright, finger dexterity, and parental behavior which often blur the line between human being and beast, intensifying the interactions between the two. This paper will concentrate on two French-Canadian stories where the dynamics change between animal and master, wild and tame, and result in the bears unwittingly triumphing over their human masters. This unexpected twist allows a closer look at the bear as a hero figure, returning to its mythic stature as it disappears into the forest, leaving the townspeople with a newfound respect for the natural world.

Twentieth-century Québécois authors Yves Thériault and Roch Carrier use the bear as a central character in their respective works: 1951's *Le Dompteur d'Ours* (The Bear Tamer, translation mine) and 1979's "What Language do Bears Speak?" Both stories are set in the post-war period in rural French-speaking Québec, which as Yoram Carmeli points out was a crucial time for animal literature. During this period, society was undergoing a transformation away from the traditional animal exploitation shows popular in eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century circus and menagerie acts, towards a more conservationist approach to animals and nature. The development of ecocriticism as a field for literary analysis allows an examination of the bear as a representation of the natural world and how the human characters in these two works are faced with a change of perception about their relationship to these animals and to their human masters. John Sandlos argues in his 2001 brief panorama of animals in Canadian literature that one of the distinct achievements of Canadian authors has been to include the mythological personality of the animal alongside its biological self, rather than concentrate solely on the physical presence and prowess of the animal species. In this way, Carrier and Thériault's bears are a composite of the fabled bear of lore that was free in the wild, and the ferocious beast that struggles against imprisonment in the city zoo, the carnival, and in hunters' traps.

Thériault's novel is a fictional account of a wanderer named Hermann who speaks French with a foreign accent. Hermann travels from town to town with nothing but his modest clothing and his burly countenance, promising the townsfolk a great show as he fights a wild bear to the death. Excitement for the show mounts, as the local townspeople offer him shelter and food, and two local hunters, the Jubin brothers, go into the woods to find a bear worthy of the battle. During Hermann's

three-day stay in the remote Québec village, he unwittingly has a profound effect on many of its inhabitants. Weak men find their inner strength, boys become men; and women rediscover their repressed sensuality. Hermann's visit awakens many dormant passions as this bear-like man with his enormous physical presence and short grunting utterances tries to distance himself from the townspeople who are simultaneously fascinated, frightened, and attracted to the stranger. His plans are to eat, sleep and con the people out of their money by promising to fight a bear he never intends to confront. When the big day arrives, after passing his hat around, Hermann, like a bullfighter before his *corrida*, excuses himself to pray alone in the church just before the fight. He then slips out the back door and disappears into the woods, making a cowardly escape. The townspeople are stunned, and the bear is left unchallenged, the winner by default.

Carrier's short story, set in the late 1940s-early 50s, is part of a collection of childhood remembrances which highlight the author's coming of age in a small town in the French-speaking province of Québec, under the dominance of the Catholic church and the harshness of Canadian winters. His young self anxiously awaits the arrival of the famous English-speaking Dr. Schultz and his amazing circus, featuring posters that promise as its *pièce de résistance* a battle between a "savage bear" and the cultured, and civilized, Dr. Schultz himself (104). Anticipation of the show builds in the townspeople, especially in the children, until the day the circus finally arrives in town. When the bear gets loose shortly after arriving, escaping its chains in the makeshift caravan, all the men of the town go off into the woods to bring back the great beast. In the meantime, the show must go on as Dr. Schultz sets up his stage and props, puts on his ringmaster outfit, and begins his other animal acts, one by one. The men from the village triumphantly return leading a roaring, screaming, kicking, and furious bear hoping to proudly present it to its master. However, in a surprising turn, the wild bear captured by the men is not the trained performer that Dr. Schultz is expecting, and he is subsequently mauled by the beast all the while shouting in English that this isn't *his* bear (109, *emphasis mine*). He lies on the stage, trampled and bleeding in disgrace, having lost his jacket and pants while the bear runs off back to the wild as the victor.

In both stories, the main protagonists, Hermann and Dr. Schultz, are presented as worldly men who boast physical prowess and a reputation for conquering wild beasts. According to Paul Shepard and Barry Sanders, the bear is the prototype of the wild animal, a kind of human in the wilderness who represents a paradigm in the myriad ways the bear resembles the human being: sexual intercourse and courting, birth rituals, maternal care, hibernation, hand dexterity and walking upright. The fact that both men are presented as bastions of strength and courage exemplifies critic Steve Baker's analysis of the characterization of animals in human narratives where the two species are described similarly, and stereotypes of their physical attributes are often exaggerated in order to further glorify and revere the human characters in the eyes of their public (in Huggan and Tiffin 215-18). The townspeople in both stories fully expect the men to win the contest against the bears and they therefore elevate the stature of Hermann and Dr. Schultz to a mythic level in the same way as Canadian author Marian Engel evokes the folklore and mythology of the bear who possesses "the strength of ten men and the sense of twelve" (55). The fact that both men have chosen to fight a bear, their wild alter-ego, is all the more impressive to their audiences.

Dr. Schultz, described as the "unsurpassable former hunter in Africa, former zookeeper in Europe and former free-style wrestling champion in Germany, Austria and the United States" (104) is a combination of famous American lion tamer Clyde Beatty and his circus, and Frank Buck of "Bring 'em Back Alive" fame, who

besides being a hunter and a movie actor, had a short stint as a zookeeper. Both men were prominent in popular culture at the time. Amongst all the animal acts in Dr. Schultz's circus, it is the taming of the bear that exalts his bravery and strength the most, as this battle between the "fierce forces of nature and the cunning of human intelligence might be fatal for one of the protagonists" (104). Because Schultz has defeated bears in the past, he is a hero of legendary proportions in the eyes of his public and the children are awestruck at seeing him in the flesh.

Thériault's Hermann is presented from the very beginning of the story as a physical doppelganger to the bear: this stocky, burly, heavy, massive man, with a wild look in his eyes and black curly hair down to his shoulders, even walks like a bear (8). His smile has an appearance not unlike that of a teddy bear sketched on his lips, and like a teddy bear, his eyes constantly gaze off to some faraway place. However, Hermann's smile is a more disquieting interior smile, not unlike a smirk, and the reader wonders whether he finds the townsfolk amusing or if he is hiding something. He arrived in the town from the forest and spends his time lying around on the grass, accepting meals and lodging from the local people while he waits for the hunters to bring back a bear for him to fight. He displays more animal-like behavior when he gets down on all fours to talk to a twelve-year old boy to persuade him not to go hunting with his father, presenting a contrast to the parents in the story who maintain the more traditional physical distance of superiority with their children as they tell them what to do. The more the townspeople observe and interact with Hermann, the more they begin to see him as bear-like, convinced that he will win his fight against a wild bear.

In contrast to the townspeople's respect for Dr. Schultz's well-publicized career, their awe and admiration for Hermann come from the unknown: his foreign accent, his lack of a past, roots, family, job, or any kind of permanence. A man of few words whose demeanor and appearance represent a marked difference from the hardworking Catholic townspeople, he evokes suspicion, curiosity, fear, and desire. The effect of his physical presence is immediate on the men who envy him and the women who lust for him. His mysterious life beyond the constraints of small-town, repetitive drudgery holds tremendous appeal for all the inhabitants of this rural village, both young and old. Hermann represents the ideals of freedom, strength, masculinity, and virility. Although he has encountered this reaction in every town he has visited in the past, Hermann does not capitalize on, nor even fully understand, his hypnotic effect on the local population. He does not seek out interaction, but responds politely in his communications, preferring to keep these at a minimum, all the while adding to his mystique. On the other hand, Dr. Schultz is very aware of his celebrity persona, and does everything he can to encourage his star-struck public. Instead of his physical appearance, it is his self-aggrandizing advertisements, speeches, and created persona that make him a larger-than-life character and convince the townspeople that he will win in his contest with the bear.

Both authors depict their bears as wild, savage, and awe-inspiring. The animals' reputations are built on generations of physical dominance and centuries of legendary status. While awaiting the arrival of Dr. Schultz and his bear, the village children are excited at the thought of seeing a "real, live bear" (104), not like the dead ones they have seen in the past, victims of the hunters' traps and gunshots. They want to see the bear they have heard of in legends, in stories, the animals that stand high on two legs, walking like a human, roaring, with claws like knives, who take as many as ten bullets to fell them and scare loggers so badly that their hair turns white (105). It is through the commercialization of the bear in the circus arena that it is brought down from its mythical place to the earthly sphere of humans. According to critic Tania Aguila-Wray, the "settler-invader" impulse, which has

long been a part of Canadian literature, leads to a human desire to claim the land and to possess the natural world as a form of myth appropriation (5). If the bear is on the same stage as a human, the contest is real and the two men who are expected to defeat their bear opponents will take on mythical status.

Thériault's bear appears late in the story. It is the legends of fierce encounters between human and beast that keep Hermann's public anxious before they see the animal. When the Jubin brothers are charged with laying a trap to capture the bear that will be the stranger's worthy opponent, the townspeople anticipate a battle like they have never before seen. Respectful of the place of the bear in the forest hierarchy, the two hunters invest much time, effort and thought into placing and timing their trap. This is not an easy feat, and Thériault spends a complete chapter in his novel (108-121) describing the great physical strength needed to contain the bear. Once the brothers have succeeded in capturing their prey, their respect for the animal gives way to one brother's commercial desires, and they argue over who now owns the bear: the hunters or Hermann if he is the future victor. In a comical reversal of roles, the brothers engage in a brutal fistfight with each other while the roaring bear, in its trap, is a captive spectator, thus blurring further the lines between human and animal. At the end of his story, Thériault does not tell us what happens to the bear after the cowardly departure of Hermann—is it released into the wild? Is it killed for its hide and meat?—Regardless, in this tale the bear is spared from performing in a battle staged for entertainment, and both its honor and its mythology therefore remain intact.

Communication between the charlatans and their public is an important part of the show. The language of showmanship is the tool used to exalt the spectacle and excite the audience. In Carrier's short story, the role of language is foregrounded in the title: "What Language Do Bears Speak?" For the townspeople, there is an extra layer of exoticism about Dr. Schultz because he does not speak their language. Instead, the words that he utters make the children wonder if he is speaking in "English or bear" (111). When Dr. Schultz is mauled by the wild bear, mistakenly returned to him as his own bear, the coroner explains that the men from the town who captured the animal obviously misunderstood, since the bear must have been speaking English, as he certainly wasn't speaking French (111). In what Bruce Boehrer calls "sentimental anthropomorphism" (3), this bear is given the trait of speaking a human language which serves to make the attack on Dr. Schultz darkly comical as the bear tamer's death is reduced to an error in communication. The bear is anthropomorphized and turned into a trained performer, diminishing its inherent value and status in the natural world. In Thériault's novel, the protagonist Hermann is likewise portrayed as an exotic outsider. He speaks fluent French but with a foreign accent. His manner of speaking is sexy, smooth, and whispering, and the author makes a connection between the animal quality of his voice and his virility. The bear itself is very vocal when captured as would be expected: roaring, moaning and protesting. As Hermann growls his sparse replies to the town folks' questions, his bear-like persona is heightened. However, unlike Carrier, Thériault does not anthropomorphize his bear, choosing instead to retain the wild savageness in both man and beast. The critic, Mary Allen, unknowingly summarizes Hermann's character very well when she states in her book *Animals in American Literature*: "if to be wild is good, to become domesticated is to sell out to a master" (3).

Both Schultz and Hermann remain outsiders, in large part because their language is different. Because of this distance between them and the French-speaking townspeople they come to meet, the link between the two men and their bear opponents becomes stronger. As a result, both men and beasts are strangers to the town and therefore share a common bond between human and animal, outside of

the comprehension of the village folk in what Paul Bouissac calls a “secret code” between animal and tamer (21). This secret code impresses the audience and makes the perceived connection between animal and master stronger, thereby exalting the two men to a higher status than their public.

For both the audience and the reader, the travelling circus and animal show perfectly illustrate the theme of carnival. According to Yoram Carmeli, who adapts Bouissac’s definition of animal carnivals, this environment highlights the perpetual wandering of the performers, the travelling troupe, and exemplifies the conflict between Nature and Culture, where Nature has traditionally represented the untamed wild animal, and Culture the intellect and sophistication of the human tamer in the urban society. In their chapter on literary representations of nature and ecocritical thought in Québec literature, Stephanie Posthumus and Élise Salaün provide an historical context for these binaries. In order to encourage development of the French colony in North America, early settlers to the Canadian province were promised an “Eden” in the rural life that awaited them and the chance to tame the wild through agricultural farming (307). From the 1950s through the 1970s, literature dramatically changed its representation of the interactions between humans and their habitat as the city became an idealized setting for literature. Carrier’s and Thériault’s characters are rural townspeople who saw this traditional human-animal dynamic blurred by the bear-like traits of the story protagonists and by the eventual triumph of the bears, thus leading to a role reversal as the masters fail to dominate.

In both French-Canadian stories, the classic battle between human and beast is the show, the excitement, and the draw for the townspeople. As critic Marianne Dekoven writes: “these spectacles . . . support the narrow Darwinism that interprets survival of the fittest literally” (364). Both Schultz’s and Hermann’s reputations depend on their ability to deceive the crowd into believing that they are the fittest and the most powerful. Carrier’s child narrator describes in vivid detail the colorful circus posters announcing the arrival of Dr. Schultz and his circus. These graphic representations of the event elevate both animal and human performer to larger-than-life status and build a sense of anticipation for the event.

Likewise, Catherine Elick writes in her analysis of animal carnivals that Mikhail Bakhtin’s seminal analyses of the carnival space apply very well to the animal show. The seasonal madness of the carnival is a time when traditional lines have broken down and people who are separated in normal everyday life come together without barriers on the carnival square to demonstrate what Bakhtin believes is the “suspension or inversion of hierarchical relationships” (in Elick 455-458). In a traditional animal show, the beast is exalted, but debased at the same time. Both Carrier’s and Thériault’s bears arrive in chains, offered up as the prisoners of their masters, forced to play their role of ferocious beast who is tamed by the supposedly intellectually and physically superior animal tamers. The members of the public get so caught up in the carnival atmosphere that they are unable to tell the difference between the show and reality. The men are granted mythical status as superheroes; they are superhuman in the eyes of their audience, capable of anything. Conversely, the animals have been stripped of their legendary status as they are seen as vulnerable captives in the earthly sphere of the performance stage. This is certainly evidenced when Dr. Schultz is attacked by the savage bear and the crowd goes wild, laughing and cheering, believing it all to be a part of the act. Thériault’s townsfolk are left waiting for Hermann to come back out of the church, somehow unable to believe that he had simply left with their money, avoiding the physical confrontation with the bear out of cowardice. Instead, they remain still, hoping anxiously that he will return to fight the bear and put on the show.

The excitement of the human and beast dynamic is further complicated by the sexual link between man and bear explicitly seen in Thériault's novel through the character of Hermann—a man-bear who stimulates the desires of the women in the town. No woman is immune to his animal magnetism: not the forty-year-old spinster, the young, nubile teenager, the middle-aged wife, the beautiful young newlywed, nor even the town prostitute. Hermann seems puzzled by this lust that follows him from town to town, but he only succumbs physically to one woman: the prostitute, Adèle, who wants no more than a physical connection from him, not a committed relationship with the promise of a life full of danger, excitement, freedom, and travel—all of which Hermann represents to the repressed women of the small town. His animalistic qualities are virile and sexually charged.

As Michel Pastoureau notes, sexual union between bear and woman is linked to myth and legend and is exemplified in folk and fairy tales such as: Snow White and Rose Red (Brothers Grimm), Beauty and the Beast (Charles Perrault), the Goldilocks variants (Robert Southey), and John the Bear (King Rolf's Saga), in which the offspring of a bear and a woman is thought to have heroic qualities as an invincible warrior, combining the strength of a bear and the brains of a human. In a more modern version of these tales, Engel's novel echoes Thériault's evocation of bear sexuality in its bestial coupling. The bear is the wild, untamed man who does not conform to society's constraints and whose sole motivation is carnal desire. Engel's female protagonist is seduced by the bear's physical prowess and strength as well as by its mythical status, in the same way the female townspeople are sexually captivated by Hermann - he becomes a forbidden fantasy. His animal sexuality further blurs the distinction between human and beast, by closing a gap between the two species; critics Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin refer to the animal character as a "catalyst for the sexual awakening of the human protagonist in the text" (215), whether or not the sexual act is consummated.

In Carrier's story, we see an implicit sexual undertone in the dynamic between Dr. Schultz and his bear. Although we are not told the sex of his bear, the circus master plainly states that the bear "is more important than his own wife" (108). Schultz's relationship with the bear may not be openly sexual, but his masculine prowess and virility are judged against his performance with the bear, and his forearm muscles, large, gloved hands, and numerous scars on his body are the physical evidence of his brute manliness. It is noteworthy that in both stories, the bear is twinned to the male, with both sharing masculine characteristics, despite a long literary and cultural tradition of gendering nature as female in opposition to human culture as male (Reynolds and Haslam). These works thus pose an interesting paradigm shift in the analysis of sexual connotations within the relationship between human and beast.

Through these physical personas, Dr. Schultz and Hermann serve as archetypal characters for the animal tamer. Although different in character, their basic motivation is financial gain through treachery, a dishonest act, deceiving the public. Readers are certainly familiar with this archetype and know its roots based in real life. Shepard and Sanders tell the story of real-life bear man American John "Grizzly" Adams who trained grizzly bears and other wild animals that he captured for zoos and circuses in the mid 1800s, and he eventually collaborated with and sold his animals to P. T. Barnum. Although Adams is portrayed in books and movies as a sympathetic friend to bears, he made his living showing them off, taking them out of their natural environment and bringing them into civilization. Carrier and Thériault's showmen come from an era where a man who conquers a beast is a hero; a time when the thrill of the hunt was equated to virility, strength, and masculinity. These were the superheroes of their time, but that time would soon see changes in

the relationships between humans and animals and would lead to a critical lens aimed at how language and literature portray the non-human environment.

Both Carrier and Thériault present the classic human-beast struggle in their two stories. The townspeople of small-town rural Québec, along with the reader, anticipate an animal show with an unknown and exciting outcome. The image and myth of the bear precede the appearance of the animal itself, heightening the drama and suggesting the physical prowess of the two men, who appear as heroes. This contest highlights what Astrid Bracke calls the “hierarchical dualistic system” where the human puts the beast on a lower level and assumes he or she will be the victor (221). Furthermore, Thériault and Carrier portray their human protagonists as male dominators over their animal opponents in what Huggan and Tiffin describe as a desire to attribute human meaning to the animal so that the human can triumph and “imbue Man with the possibilities of defeating him” (217). However, it is not until the end of each story that the tables are turned, and the captive defeats his master in an ironic twist. The bears are restored to heroic and mythic status and disappear into the forest in an illustration of what Huggan and Tiffin describe as “the result of [unsuccessful] human attempts to incorporate [the bear] scientifically or metaphorically into anthropomorphic paradigms” (214). The townspeople are thus forced to rethink their perceptions of the animals and of the male protagonists. Perhaps these stories can be read as an interesting foreshadowing of the decades to come with many important developments of the fields of ecocritical research and animal studies, and of circus shutdowns, angry protests, and public outcry about the role that these animals have been forced to play over the past centuries, all in the name of entertainment.

Notes

¹ For an historical perspective on the cultural importance of the bear, see Curry. For its symbolic and mythical status, see Pastoreau.

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“The Work of Sulphur”: Syncretism, St. Peter’s Basilica, and *Paradise Lost*

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The circumstances of John Milton’s life when *Paradise Lost* was first published in 1667 were much more congenial than they had been when he composed the bulk of the poem, likely in the very late 1650s and early 1660s.¹ In that time, as Nicholas von Maltzahn reminds us,

Milton’s regicide pacts were banned by public decree and burnt by the hangman. Milton was ordered arrested but escaped the death penalty. He was imprisoned that autumn, released in December, then went into a hiding complete enough that as late as June 1666 a Continental correspondent presumed him dead. (42)

At the time, Milton clearly had reason to be cagey in how he touched on certain topics, not least his long and vexed relationship to Catholicism with regards to his larger project of promoting religious toleration in England. One of the formative experiences of Milton’s artistic life was his tour of Italy in the late 1630s; he spent the middle portion of life arguing for the toleration of all forms of Christianity *except* Catholicism; and he published his final great works in an England under constant fear that its monarch, Charles II, would follow his wife and brother into the Catholic fold. For Catherine Gimelli Martin, in her book *Milton’s Italy: Anglo-Italian Literature, Travel, and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England*, Milton’s life and thought presented “the almost monumental problem of reconciling Milton’s at times virulent anti-Catholicism with his almost equally astonishing tolerance toward his Italian Catholic hosts and their co-religionists” (80). This essay will argue that Milton’s experience of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome was to become a powerful shorthand for many of his complicated views on the entanglements of art, religion, and propaganda, most clearly seen in Milton’s decision to base Pandemonium, the devilish temple constructed at the end of Book I of *Paradise Lost*, upon St. Peter’s.

While there is no question that Milton spent time in Italy, and that he found the experience both rewarding and formative, we have virtually no details of where he was and what he was doing at any given time, and the details he provides are in published tracts where they serve rhetorical and polemical, rather than biographical, purposes. It is not even entirely certain why or when he returned to England; his own later contention that he returned due to the outbreak of civil war seems off by over a year, and biographers are still uncertain of details such as whether Milton learned of the death of his best friend Charles Diodati from a visit to Diodati’s uncle in Genoa, whether he brought the news there himself, or whether he remained

ignorant of it until his return to England. Barbara Lewalski has summed up the lack of concrete details of this trip in her biography of Milton, claiming “writing this period of Milton’s life involves treading a fine line between judicious speculation and unwarranted guesses” (88). Some of these unresolvable biographical details can be avoided by looking at this trip in light of syncretism, a device Milton will employ often throughout his poetic career.

First, a presumption that rests firmly in the camp of judicious speculation: while in Rome, Milton visited St. Peter’s Basilica and toured its interior. While records of Milton’s day-to-day activities in Rome are lacking even by the scanty standards of the rest of his trip, those activities we are aware of seem to suggest that Milton’s time there was often spent in the company of Catholics. Milton visited Rome twice, in October through November of 1638 and January through February of 1639; the latter visit occurred on his way back to England. Details of his first visit are almost entirely lacking; in his biography of Milton, Gordon Campbell can provide documentation for only October 30, 1638. However, on that date Milton dined at the English College, which Campbell identifies “as a Jesuit seminary whose graduates were intended for service in England”; this strongly implies that Milton was comfortable with and welcomed by religiously motivated Catholics. While there are more details of his second visit, the dates most important for this argument occur on February 27 and 28 of 1639; on the former date Milton attended an opera at the Palazzo Barberini, and on the latter he had a private audience with Cardinal Francesco Barberini (Campbell 122-3). The nature of this audience is unknown, but it does lend itself to the conjecture that Milton was comfortable moving in the highest Catholic circles in Rome, as Cardinal Barberini was the nephew of Pope Urban VIII. It is very unlikely that Milton visited Rome and refused to tour its most famous Christian landmark, one that is visible from nearly everywhere in the city, unless he were violently hostile to anything redolent of Catholicism, yet Milton’s few documented activities give no evidence of such hostility. Whatever his later thoughts about Catholicism would be, on his Italian journey he seemed willing to suspend his judgments and take in the sights.

Beyond this plausible biographical conjecture, there is a tradition of finding evidence for Milton’s familiarity with St. Peter’s in the description of Pandemonium at the end of Book I of *Paradise Lost*. The description itself is surprisingly scanty:

Built like a Temple, where Pilasters round
Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
With Golden Architrave; nor did there want
Cornice or Freeze, with bossy Sculptures grav’n
The Roof was fretted Gold . . . (I.713-7)

While this admittedly isn’t a great deal to go on, the majority of the evidence summed up by William McClung in his article “The Architecture of Pandemonium,” which recounts and examines competing claims on the subject throughout the 20th century, allows for a broad identification of Milton’s hellish temple with the Basilica. There is certainly no church more answerable to Milton’s customary poetic technique and polemical purpose in his description of Pandemonium than St. Peter’s.

Milton’s description of the construction of Pandemonium is an example of his characteristic syncretism, wherein he employs characters from various mythological traditions in order to ultimately incorporate them under an overarching Christian framework of history and theology. This syncretizing tendency predates his trip to Italy; in fact, it plays a central role in his first major poetic work in English, 1629’s

“On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity,” as Gordon Teskey claims, “from the beginning to the end of Milton’s career there is tension between, on the one hand, the ideological unity and transcendental verticality of Christian belief and, on the other hand, the tolerant multiplicity of classical myth” (34).

By the time Milton turns to his depiction of St. Peter’s in *Paradise Lost*, his use of classical mythology has tilted decidedly towards “the transcendental verticality of Christian belief” Teskey identified above (34). Milton will locate many foreign gods and goddesses among the fallen angels in Hell, but one in particular is singled out as an example of syncretism: the chief architect of Pandemonium. Milton’s means of introducing him is the clearest distillation of his particular style of syncretism, and deserves quotation at some length:

In ancient Greece, and in Ausonian land
Men called him Mulciber, and how he fell
From Heav’n, they fabl’d, thrown by angry Jove . . .
. . . thus they relate,
Erring; for he with this rebellious rout
Fell long before; nor aught avail’d him now
To have built in Heav’n high Towrs; nor did he scape
By all his Engins, but was headlong sent
With his industrious crew to build in hell. (l.739-51)

Milton is doing several things in this passage, with varying levels of subtlety. It continues his approach from earlier in Book 1 of subjugating other theologies to the overarching force of the Christian God; figures at one time worshipped as part of a polytheistic pantheon are here reduced to the punished servants of monotheistic power. However, there may also be a strain of this syncretism that bears directly on Milton’s view of St. Peter’s Basilica and what its construction represented in terms of Christian history. Milton first hints at this by giving the architect the name ‘Mulciber,’ when either Hephaestus or Vulcan would have been far more familiar; it is clear from Jove’s punishment of him that this god of the forge is intended here. Mulciber, though, was one of two epithets often attached to the Roman Vulcan, and it means, roughly, ‘Fire Allayer’ (“Vulcan” 139). As god of the forge, Vulcan could not only build, but could also control fire, yet is ironically placed by way of his fall into an eternal fire beyond the control of any but Milton’s God. Milton calls attention to this irony through a characteristic device of his writing in *Paradise Lost* first described in Stanley Fish’s seminal work *Surprised by Sin*. To briefly summarize Fish’s argument, Milton will often craft a lengthy narrative passage leading the reader to a certain interpretation, only to dramatically undercut the reader’s interpretation by using his Latin syntax to conclude the passage with a negative verb. Here, the reader is walked through the rather familiar story of Vulcan’s fall as recounted in mythology only to be brought up short by the concluding word “erring.” Here as elsewhere, we are reminded that in Milton’s cosmology there have never been other gods, only lesser creations of the one God, and that to believe otherwise is to begin to walk the paths of sin that lead to Hell.

In both its construction and relationship to Milton’s poetry, St. Peter’s Basilica is open to Fish’s line of analysis. Its construction, in intent and execution, attempts to enact a similar level of monotheistic control on a formerly pagan culture and city as a microcosm of Rome’s religious, political, and cultural designs on Europe as a whole. The site of the original St. Peter’s, constructed at the command of the Emperor Constantine, ostensibly marked the grave site of the Apostle Peter; as R.A. Scotti notes, “A millennium later, the Christian Popes would cart the stone of the

pagan city across the river to build their Basilica, and this extraordinary merging of the sacred and the profane would become the centerpiece of a second Golden Age" (20). While there is definitely a practical element to reusing earlier materials, the propaganda purposes of such reclamation are also clear. Even buildings of pagan origin such as the Pantheon, which had been used as a Christian church for centuries, were not immune. While the story that Urban VIII stripped the Pantheon of its bronze solely to give it to Bernini to construct his baldachin within St. Peter's is dubious, there is no doubt that Urban VIII did strip the Pantheon of its bronze by Papal order, giving rise to the satirical verse "Quod non fecerunt barbari, fecerunt Barberini": "What the barbarians did not, the Barberini did" (Scotti 243; translation mine). Just as Milton reworked the trappings of pagan epic poetry to further his particular Christian views, the materials of pagan antiquity in Rome were remade to the greater glory of the Christian God.

However, even if Milton were somehow not aware of the parallel between the construction of St. Peter's and his own poetry, the tourist who looks upon St. Peter's as a proper monument to God has fallen prey to the same error as the reader who saw Mulciber as a god in his own right. Rather than serving as a unifying symbol of Christendom, the means various popes employed to fund the construction of St. Peter's were integral to the fracturing of Christendom in the Reformation. Martin Luther made direct reference to the use of indulgences to fund the construction of St. Peter's in the fiftieth of his *Ninety-Five Theses*: "Christians should be taught that, if the pope knew the exactions of the indulgence-preachers, he would rather the church of St. Peter were reduced to ashes than be built with the skin, flesh, and bones of the sheep" (Scotti 151). In the same way that Mulciber's building in heaven allowed him no control over the ultimate fires of Hell, for Milton the construction of St. Peter's led to salvation only ironically, by instigating a Reformation that led to a greater truth, while consigning those who worshipped at the old altar to the flames. Like the *felix culpa* of humanity's fall that leads directly to the triumph of Christ prophesized in the last books of the poem, Milton's likely placement of St. Peter's in Hell depicts its construction as an act of papal arrogance that inadvertently leads to the fulfilment of God's plan.

Much as he forced classical mythology to submit to Christian truth, Milton here seems to be subsuming the architecture and mythos of Catholicism under that void of discarded mythology that is subservient to his own version of Protestant truth. While discussion of the prose works that occupied the middle portion of Milton's life is beyond the scope of this examination of a particular part of a particular poem, the reader would do well to keep them in mind when turning to *Paradise Lost* as solid evidence of Milton's willingness to engage in all manner of ridicule and polemic against Catholicism and Protestant sects that hewed too closely to Catholic ritual.²

There is justification in seeing Milton's depiction of St. Peter's in an anti-papist, rather than a more broadly anti-Catholic, light, of course; Gimelli Martin attempts to draw a line in Milton's work distinguishing between anti-Catholicism and anti-papism, citing Dante as an influential model of an anti-papist Catholic whom Milton admired (80). Indeed, the fallen angels do not just construct a palace; they then progress to elect a leader, and the simile Milton chooses to depict their gathering is rich in anti-papal significance:

As Bees
In spring time, when the Sun with Taurus rides,
Pour forth thir populous youth about the Hive
In clusters; they among fresh dews and flowers

Flie to and fro, or on the smoothed Plank,
The suburb of thir Straw-built Cittadel,
New rub'd with Baum, expatiate and confer
Thir state affairs. (l.767-775)

The bees here mentioned would not have been unfamiliar to anyone who had visited the Palazzo Barberini, met with Cardinal Barberini, or explored the baldachin Bernini had erected to mark St. Peter's grave in the Basilica. The baldachin was decorated extensively with bees from the Barberini coat of arms to signify its commissioning by Urban VIII, the most famous Barberini of all. This association is further strengthened by Milton's description of "The great Seraphic Lords and Cherubim/ In close recess and secret conclave" (l.794-5), a fairly straightforward reference to the gathering of Cardinals in the Sistine Chapel to elect a new pope. John N. King notes "Protestant pamphleteers employed conclave, a word that denotes a private ecclesiastical assembly, especially of the cardinals who gather at the deaths of popes, as a cant term for attacking alleged Catholic conspiracies" (60).

Milton's allusions to St. Peter's and the Barberini bees are somewhat obscured in his poem, but not particularly deeply. *Paradise Lost* was first published and then re-written at a period when anti-Catholic sentiment was publicly high, but the throne was occupied by the crypto-Catholic King Charles II, who had spared Milton's life at the Restoration. At the beginning of the 21st century, John King's *Milton and Religious Controversy* lucidly laid out the case that *Paradise Lost* had been neglected as "part of a strategy of antiformalistic polemic against the Church of Rome, High Church Protestantism, and clericalism of all creeds" working "from the vantage point of the native tradition of religious controversy and satire" (xiii). Milton's treatment of St. Peter's Basilica as a model for Pandemonium represents the poetic technique of syncretism that, over the course of a long career in controversy and under duress from a hostile monarch, came to work on a vivid memory from youth to fashion a subtle restatement of themes the elderly Milton could no longer voice openly.

Notes

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² See John N. King's *Milton and Religious Controversy*.

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Close Reading: The Key to Entering and Comprehending the World of a Literary Text

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My first experience of being immersed in a text came when I checked out a book from the first wooden box traveling library that showed up at my remote elementary school. As I read Alice Dalgliesh's *The Davenports and Cherry Pie*, I was transported into a new world, coming back to "reality" only when I put the book down. As a longtime teacher of English, I've continually thought about how to engage my students. My dilemma has been how to shift the focus to and keep it on what transpires between the literary text and the readers in my Shakespeare class. How can I stimulate them to enter and comprehend the world created in a literary text? "Close reading" seems like an obvious answer until one considers the numerous shifts in how close reading has been defined in the academy during my career, which began in 1966. Although some of those perspectives work better with one title than another, an overview of those shifts will give a glimpse of the elements dancing around in my head that I draw from as I seek to immerse my students in Shakespeare.

I remember assignments during my undergraduate years that immersed me in the formalist approach to close reading of poetry, drama, and fiction. We were assigned to find the key words in the reading and supply denotative and connotative values and implications and an awareness of multiple meanings. We were even directed to find the etymologies of words in dictionaries as the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) and to provide any of the details of historical changes in word meanings. We were also instructed to look for structural relationships and patterns. We then sometimes recognized some of the words that were deeply connotative and perhaps named objects that had symbolic value. As we probed connotations and symbols, patterns and images emerged that kept coming up. Some of these contributed to the setting of the work, its actual place and time. Bit by bit, we readers began to see a theme emerging from the literary work.

In the first decade of my teaching, the structuralists of the 1970s diverged from crucial aspects of formalist analysis. As explained by Jonathan Gil Harris in *Shakespeare and Literary Theory*, they expanded Mikhail Bakhtin's emphasis on recurrent structures of binary opposition in literature and culture to understand language as a system of differences (25-26). Ramon Jacobson expanded the Russian formalists' conviction that poetic language is distinguished by its capacity to defamiliarize or make strange everyday speech by associating that capacity with the skillful deployment of signs that function in either a metaphorical register (which assumes similarity between two concepts) or a metonymic register (which depends not on similarity but on the contiguity of two concepts) (32). By the 1980s the

deconstructionists focused on the impossibility of deciding on a single meaning without committing violence against a simultaneous meaning (Harris 47). In a more recent interpretative essay, Wilfred L. Guerin illustrates that dialectic in *Hamlet* (129) focuses on the metaphor of the trap found in various images and allusions to entanglement: “springes, lime, nets, mousetrap, and angles or hooks” by humans who are “trapped in their own dilemmas, in their own questions, in the very questioning of the universe” (130). From the first scene of Act I in *Hamlet*, the soldiers of the watch convey that it is a disturbed world. “The guards have no answers for the mystery, their uncertainty, or their premonitions; their quandary is mirrored in abundant questions and minimal answers—a rhetorical phenomenon that recurs throughout the play, even in the soliloquies of Hamlet” (130).

In the 1990s scholarly close readings of a Shakespearean text soon turned to insights about Shakespeare himself incorporating close reading of varied source materials to echo any one myth. In his introduction for *Ovid’s Metamorphoses: The Arthur Golding Translation of 1567*, John Frederick Nims references lines or passages from *Titus Andronicus* that echo those of Arthur Golding’s translation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and those which vary from Golding’s. After Nims consults Ovid’s text for Shakespeare’s details that vary from Golding, he suggests they result from Shakespeare’s own close reading translation of those passages from Ovid (xxi).

By the twenty-first century, students training to be classroom teachers, myself included, were drawn to Ralph Cohen’s title *ShakesFear and How to Cure It: A Handbook for Teaching English*. He claims that rhetorical knowledge equated to power in the collective mind of Renaissance humanism as basis to posit that Elizabethans went to the playhouse to learn new words because they delighted in Shakespeare’s innovations which were both memorable and thematic. The *OED* gives Shakespeare credit for introducing almost 3,000 words to the English language as well as many of our commonly used phrases. A small sample of words such as “hostile,” “overblown,” and “sanctimonious” show that we use many of them in our speech every day. A small sample of phrases such as “It’s Greek to me” (*JC* 1.2.12) and “What is done is done” (*Mac.* 5.1.63-64) are among the forty or more we hear used frequently.

Ralph Cohen’s speculation that audiences attended Shakespeare’s performances to build skill with language stimulated Cohen’s contemporary literary critics and textual editors to explore how the close readings by their current theater practitioners and theater attendees or literary scholars differ. As a result of their explorations, Lynette Hunter and Peter Lichtenfel, even in the first section. “Text and Voice,” of *Shakespeare, Language and the Stage*, illustrate the considerable slippage that occurs across the gap between literary scholars and performers for a term as simple as “voice.” “Costume, music, lighting, scenery, properties, blocking and most importantly, the actors’ voices and bodies all make meanings that are ‘read’ by the playgoer” (12) as the performance unfolds. By contrast, Shakespearean literary critics and textual scholars who benefit from re-examining a printed text also “distinguish a variety of distinct voices being created within the text” (12). In earlier decades, critics thought of these as the voices of many different individuals. Recent close readings treat them as a concert of social voices and consider the relationship of each voice to the other voices. For example, in *Romeo and Juliet*, the Nurse has a different voice in private with Juliet than she does with the Friar or with Romeo and his friends (12). Close readings such as the ones which identify a concert of social voices used by one dramatis persona reflect how scholars have built upon and expanded close reading which the New Critics imagined as an unmediated encounter between the mind of the reader and the bounded text. As Jonathan Crewe notes in

“Reading Horatio,” certainly in the theater, questions of staging and performance history have additionally become salient as the director and performers make repeated close readings to put a show into rehearsal and during rehearsals.

In “Reading Horatio,” Jonathan Crewe acknowledges the mediated or over-determined character of scholarly readings and acknowledges that readings of any two lines will vary depending on what contexts, assumptions, or critical purposes are in play. “Moreover, the real or imagined settings in which readings are undertaken will result in significant variation” (272). First, “it is surely safe to say that in many settings, including that of the undergraduate classroom, ‘reading’ would begin with *OED* definitions of the words” (272). Second, “merely working through these definitions would practically add up to a historically informed reading of the lines, perhaps even the best reading” (272). Third, “close reading might also plausibly include metrical consideration of the lines, the regularity of which seems consistent with . . . characterizations” (272). Fourth, “one might also check whether the lines appear in both of the quartos as well as the Folio to lend themselves to editorial discussion of different textual incarnations of the play” (273). Crewe adds:

Beyond these lexical, metrical, and textual considerations, close reading could branch out in many directions. Readers might choose to pursue linkages between these lines and others in the play. The dramatic context(s) in which the lines are spoken not only can but should be considered, with sufficient attention to what immediately precedes and follows them in the play . . . Readers are free to trace echoes and connections all the way through the Shakespeare canon. None of these choices would constitute a departure from close reading. (273)

Crewe notes that in any close reading, cultural, historical, intellectual, and political framing will help. Consider the close reading of the political framing Margreta de Grazia gives in *Hamlet Without Hamlet*, which overturns centuries of debate about the character Hamlet’s psychological features, his interiority taken as the central subject of the play, by pointing to the political issues he shares with his character foil Fortinbras, in a play written at the time of England’s own succession crisis (6). Concurrent with de Grazia, Professor Claire R. Kinney, in her recorded lectures with printed guidebook for students for close reading of *Hamlet*, points to the intellectual framing of the play that begins with Francisco’s reply to Bernardo, “Stand and unfold yourself” (*Ham*.1.1.2). She then emphasizes the importance of unfolding in this play, the demands for people to unfold themselves or to unfold information. She adds that all these requests to unfold are accompanied from the start by a sense of things untold or untellable (37). She indicates the first scene does some unfolding of important political history plot exposition. Horatio reveals that Denmark is full of war preparations because of a previous war in which the recently deceased King Hamlet defeated and killed Fortinbras, King of Norway, and won a portion of his lands from him. Now young Fortinbras, Norway’s son, is mustering an army, intent on avenging his father and winning the territory back by force. Dramatic character foil Fortinbras, like Hamlet, is the son of a dead king, a young man whose uncle succeeded his father to the throne (38).

Russ McDonald’s collection of essays *Shakespeare Up Close: Reading Early Modern Texts* offers a compelling case for making “commitment to the low-tech examination of small sections of literary language in exquisite detail” (336). Collectively these essays make a powerful case that supports, as McDonald indicates in the introduction, “the impulse to return to a passage, to scrutinize its diction or images or sounds, to notice the presence of similar features elsewhere in

the work, and to linger over the verbal hold that [a] bit of text exerts upon the mind” (xx) to “establish a symbiotic, healthy relationship between text and context” (xxxi).

How then do I implement close reading with my students when it provides such a complex and ever-changing backdrop? Although many of my students at a rural regional university have never been to a professional theatre performance, they do spend hours with video games, television, and movies. They protest they cannot read Shakespeare’s “Old English” [sic] which is probably their mislabeling of their inexperience in noticing the rhythmical quality of printed verse and the imaginative quality and intricate structure by which poetry delivers its lofty subject matter. How then do I initiate their journey in search of joy from immersion in a Shakespearean text? I am aware that they are drawn to performances in various media. In video games they are emotionally involved because they are the main character. They experience the same things the character does. Therefore, I turn to Shakespeare’s performers in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, those guildsmen hoping to earn extra income by performing for Duke Theseus’ wedding, those “rude mechanicals” (*MND* 3.2.9) as Puck labels them, to open the semester. For our first assignments to learn about difficulties with printed scripts, we move through the scenes in which Peter Quince and his guildsmen plan, practice for, and deliver their performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

Initially, I encourage close reading in the literal sense, having the students keep a reading journal noting their sense of the characters and action and their insights as well as questions to share when they come to class. We move slowly at first in our discussion of scene by scene. For example, in Act I, scene two, Bottom’s first question resembles that of class members who, unsure of their ability to read Shakespeare, search for an internet plot summary: “First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on” (*MND* 1.2.8). Then when Bottom learns he is to play a lover, he protests he is better in “‘Ercles’ [Hercules’] vein, a tyrant’s vein” (*MND* 1.2.40), which he underscores by reciting sing song rhyming lines employing heavy Latin alliteration syntax such as schoolboys in Shakespeare’s day may have given in their grammar school translation exercises, not far afield from how my students enter reading enjambed lines as if they were end-stopped, which also mars the meaning. When Flute protests that he cannot play Thisbe, a lady, by saying “I have a beard coming” (*MND* 1.2.48), I call attention to this cultural background detail from Shakespeare’s era which Crewe indicates aids in close reading. On Shakespeare’s stage, all players were male; female parts were played by young boys.

Because Flute does not distinguish role-playing from practicing his natural trade as a bellows mender, Quince provides a tactic for female impersonation: play in a mask and “speak as small as you will” (*MND* 1.2.50). At this early stage of the semester, my students miss Bottom’s interpretation of “small voice” as he volunteers to play Thisbe. He repeats her name as “Thisne” (*MND* 1.2.52) to replace a voiced consonant with an unvoiced one. Before long, Bottom’s comments that he wants to play each role, too, has members of my class jeering “know it all,” “egomaniac,” etc. By close reading we then learn how Shakespeare builds in cues for audience laughter. Director Peter Quince explains to Bottom that he has chosen him to play Pyramus because Pyramus is “a sweet-fac’d man; a proper man as one shall see in a summer’s day; a most gentleman-like man” (*MND* 1.2.85-88). Bottom ignores direction for his character role by caring more about costume with “What beard were I best to play it in?” (*MND* 1.2.91). Quince’s reply, “some of your French crowns have no hair at all” (*MND* 1.2.97), carries close reading to the twenty-first century level in that one must understand Shakespeare’s cultural context in which loss of hair was associated with syphilis, a disease many in his audience

blamed on the French—much as some Americans blame our COVID on China—in order to really laugh with Quince at Bottom’s expense.

Close reading in the vein of John Frederick Nims’ exploration of the culture in which Shakespeare wrote gives clarification in the scene when the players next gather for rehearsal in the forest. Golding’s 1567 translation of *Ovid’s Metamorphoses* into English contains the Pyramus and Thisbe myth that Shakespeare selects as source for Peter Quince’s production. However, Shakespeare’s script for Quince’s theatre company illustrates that Elizabethan playwrights were free to revamp the story line and dramatic script features for their own purposes. As Peter Quince’s other players fear that ladies in the audience will not tolerate Pyramus’ suicide, Bottom has the answer: “We will have a Prologue that tells the audience that I Pyramus am not Pyramus but Bottom the Weaver. This will put them out of fear” (*MND* 3.1.20-21). Quince’s focus on how that prologue is to be written calls attention to Elizabethan cultural change in poetic form. Quince’s “let it be written in eight and six” (*MND* 3.1.24), the thought divisions in Elizabethan sonnets, is corrected by Bottom’s “let it be written in eight and eight,” an older form used in Golding’s translation of Ovid’s “Pyramus and Thisbe.” Nims, in his introduction to *Ovid’s Metamorphoses: The Arthur Golding Translation of 1567*, makes it clear that Shakespeare is lampooning Golding’s fourteeners that tend to break into two half lines; one of four beats, one of three, with a strong pause after each, which Shakespeare and other poets of his era have replaced with accentual-syllabic rhythmic patterns. As the players suggest adding “another prologue” and “another prologue,” Shakespeare’s lampoon extends to Golding’s excess versification, hyperbole, and even line length. Nims summarizes that compared to the sonnet form popular in Shakespeare’s day, Golding’s lines are ponderous and unwieldy (xxv).

Using Nims for guidance, my class discusses Shakespeare’s jokes about translation in the performance by Quince’s company at court. Part of the prologue follows Ovid’s Latin (not Golding’s) syntax exactly. For example, “And as she fled, her mantle she did fall / which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain” (*MND* 5.1.142-143). In contrast to Golding’s “bleeding wound,” their prologue expands Ovid’s motif of blood emphasized by alliteration (an outdated poetic device in Shakespeare’s day) in “Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade, / He bravely broach’d his boiling bloody breast” (*MND* 5.1.146-147). When they speak their parts, they sometimes break Golding’s fourteeners into three lines, such as in Pyramus’ address to Thisbe’s scarf (*MND* 5.1.276-287). Although Ovid only mentions Ninus’ tomb once, Shakespeare turns it into a running joke. His guildsmen, obviously too unschooled in the Latin classics to learn that Ninus was the legendary founder of Nineveh, do as student readers are sometimes prone to do: they substitute a familiar word perhaps with the same beginning letters for the unfamiliar one. All in Shakespeare’s audience would have heard a fool or simpleton called a “ninny.” Even after Quince’s rehearsal corrections (*MND* 3.1.97-98), Flute continues to call Ninus’ tomb Ninny’s tomb (*MND* 5.1.62), giving his audience gathered at Theseus’ courtly wedding and those in Shakespeare’s live audience as well reason to transfer the term to Flute the speaker.

We then turn class discussion to following plot development for each of the major conflicts in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, from act to act. For the rest of the semester, I divide the class into five groups, so each can use their close reading notes to prepare the commentary they will present as well as the questions they will ask their classmates, who have made their own reading notes on the same title. Very early in the semester, these students turn to YouTube and other clips to enhance their leadership of class discussions. By the end of the semester, after we have added

As You Like It, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Henry V* and *Julius Caesar*, each group will have led discussion of an Act I, an Act II, an Act III, an Act IV, and an Act V, as the groups rotate for each new assigned title. They will have experienced how Elizabethan plot structure develops.

Second, we study the comedy *As You Like It* for its probe into love sonnets as a literary form that gained in popularity during the closing of London theaters for the plague from 1592 to 1593. While discussing *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we have noted that Peter Quince's company has illustrated how cumbersome alliteration is. My class can now focus on how rhyme has transformed poetry. To form a cultural backdrop for the era in which *As You Like It* was composed, we first explore the distinctive persona and rhyme schemes in key introductory sonnets in Sir Phillip Sidney's "Astrophel and Stella" and Spenser's "Amoretti." We notice Astrophel lusts for Stella and Spenser's narrator expresses the frustration of unrequited love until sonnet 67 but then pens a celebration of love both human and divine after the lady consents to his marriage proposal. We also visit some Shakespearean sonnets, especially sonnet 76 in which the speaker, like Orlando in this play, has difficulty in composing a sonnet and sonnet 130 in which Shakespeare satirizes the conventions of the traditional Italian sonnet by inverting the similes normally used within the Petrarchan conventions. We do close reading to find features with which Ramon Jacobson indicates poetic language defamiliarizes everyday speech. We find metaphorical features as Greek roots for "Astrophil" as lover of stars and *OED* Latin roots for "Stella" as star. We find metonymical features in Spenser's title "Amoretti," his love letters to a lady whose hand he wishes to gain in marriage, in the Latin roots as "little cupids." We then explore how this Elizabethan era sonnet writing framework is echoed or transformed in *As You Like It*. We contrast the persona and rhyme scheme in the lusty partial sonnet by Touchstone (*AYLI* 3.2.101-112) with that of the love-sick Orlando in sonnets nailed on trees in the forest (*AYLI* 3.2.88-95; 3.2.125-154). We contrast how Rosalind and Celia respond to each to speculate whether Shakespeare was having a little fun with dramatic satire on the Petrarchan love sonnets of his contemporaries.

As my class moves to study the tragedy *Hamlet*, we apply Margreta DeGrazia's close reading insights about Shakespeare's use of Fortinbras and Hamlet as character foils for dramatic effect such as those we have just discussed with Touchstone and Orlando. We then emphasize Claire Kinney's insights that we need to follow how a character "unfolds" during a play. By convention, character soliloquy is a dramatic space of truth telling, of soul baring. Therefore, my class studies each of Hamlet's soliloquies in its context. For example, for the first one (*Ham.* 1.2.129-159), the class reports Hamlet gives his mother's remarriage as cause for his world-weariness. In the second one, he responds to the "Remember Me" of his father's ghost (*Ham.* 1.5.92-112). In the fourth one, the famous "To be, or not to be" (*Ham.* 3.1.54-96), the class divides into two groups so they can hear the pitch, tone, inflection and stress in Hamlet's debate to illustrate the working of Hamlet's mind and how he is torn between moral and immoral behavior, how the rational side of his mind recoils in horror at his own evil instinct, how he allows evil instincts to take over. We also note the tensions in the imagery. By his seventh soliloquy (*Ham.* 4.4.32-67), the class notices that Hamlet reflects on "what is a man?" and contrasts Fortinbras' action to his own resolution. We also look at an early quarto to learn that some of the soliloquies are missing and others are in a different context that changes their effect.

By the time we approach *Macbeth*, my class is ready for what Russ McDonald describes as a close reading return to examine a small section of literary language in exquisite detail. We view Ian McKellan's twelve-minute segment picking apart

Macbeth's response to news that Lady Macbeth is dead, his "Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow" (*Mac.* 5.5.19-28) speech taken from British television's "in studio master class" on speaking Shakespeare. McKellan speaks in depth about the imagery and analysis he used to bring this famous Macbeth speech to life for a production at the Royal Shakespeare Company.

For the sake of brevity, I am omitting details about how we applied close reading techniques to the history play presentation of famous historical figures at moments of crisis in their lives: *Henry V* as an English history play and the tragedy *Julius Caesar* which we read as if it were a Roman history play.

By the end of the semester, I have evidence that close reading strategies promoted during my lifetime have aided my students in making strides from their initial fear of Shakespeare's "Old English" (i.e., their lack of knowledge of how to read poetry) to focus on what transpires in the literary text. Immersion in various close reading strategies leads to superior performances of small scenes that each group chooses from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Although I may suggest masque-like scenes in which the classical goddesses appear for the wedding, or the scene in which Caliban, Trinculo, and Stephano plan Prospero's murder, my students are ready to transfer their favorite scenes from *The Tempest* to their favorite medium. Their imaginations and creativity fed by close reading come into play in ways that delight and surprise the whole class. In the years before many were engaged with avatars, a savvy technology student created an avatar performance from the plan her group made. Other students spend hours over in the drama department borrowing costumes and finding natural outdoor settings to create their own staging of a scene captured on cell phones and edited wonderfully. Others have transformed their scene to a favorite movie genre. For example, one group filmed in black and white their clowning of Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban's dialogue from *The Tempest* Act III, scene 4 as a Laurel and Hardy episode complete with costumes like the bowler hats and Hardy's toothbrush moustache. Likewise, those students who performed live before the class delighted us with their attention to set details that match the dialogue as Ferdinand and Miranda carry in logs (real ones trucked in from their family woodpile) and live performance of music appropriate for the action. My students understand and comprehend the connection between close reading and becoming part of the world in the literary text.

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Melville's Misnaming Mistake: Call It Ishmael

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Over the years both critics and readers of *Moby-Dick*, by focusing on the novel's relatively uninteresting aspects, have largely misunderstood the reason for the continuous power and resilience of Herman Melville's 1851 magnum opus. Theme parks, fish joints, six Hollywood films, two major operas, hundreds and hundreds of stage adaptations, and thousands and thousands of cartoons—by Gahan Wilson, Gary Larson, and every other cartoonist who can grab pen and ink—have highlighted the novel's well-known plot: the relentless pursuit of an enemy, leading up to a three-stage battle in the tradition of *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Ask anyone what *Moby-Dick* is about and you get the same answer: "Oh, yes, it's about Ahab, that maimed captain of the *Pequod*, obsessively chasing that white whale around the globe." Even the ubiquitous authority of all things, Wikipedia, decrees that the novel is "the sailor Ishmael's narrative of the obsessive quest of Ahab, captain of the whaleship *Pequod*, for revenge on Moby Dick." This is wrong on two points: first, the novel is certainly not narrated by the young "sailor" Ishmael, and second, it's not primarily about Ahab's revenge on some whale.

Melville's application of the time-honored chase-and-battle plot to the now-defunct whaling industry is creative and successful, but it does not and cannot explain the novel's continuous wonder and appeal since it was rediscovered exactly 100 years ago. How has *Moby-Dick* withstood the powerful, shifting winds of the New Criticism, Russian Formalism, Marxist theory, Structuralism, Deconstructionism, the New Historicism, and Queer and Postcolonial studies?

I believe that the key to the book's continuing appeal through decades of seismic cultural changes is the novel's elusive narrator, Ishmael. Two long studies (one very recent, one early) bear mention here: Geoffrey Sanborn's 2018 *The Value of Herman Melville* and Edgar Dryden's 1986 *Melville's Thematics of Form: The Great Art of Telling the Truth*. Sanborn, citing the psychoanalytical theories of Christopher Bollas, describes how Ishmael relates to his reader like a psychiatrist relates to a patient: introducing ideas that "open inner spaces [for the reader] for experiencing and knowing" (48). Dryden emphasizes the difference between the older, more mature narrator Ishmael and his earlier avatar, the young sailor; he compares "narrator Ishmael" to Shakespeare, a minor actor turned dramatist who uses the stage directions and soliloquys of Elizabethan tragedy (88).

In "The Two *Moby-Dicks*" George R. Stewart posited that the twenty-two chapters at the beginning of the novel can be seen as a palimpsest, showing traces under their surface of a simpler, earlier story, which Stewart calls the book's ur version, or UMD (ur *Moby-Dick*). To argue this theory Stewart uses some of

Melville's dated letters and some minor inconsistencies between what he called the two parts of the novel (chapters 1-22 and 23-135). Critics have generally accepted this theory of the book's composition and occasionally still mention the two parts of the text, as if Melville were not able to merge the earlier UMD successfully with the majority of material he almost certainly wrote after August, 1850. It's my contention that in reimagining and editing his earlier material, Melville was able to produce a seamless work that cohered—primarily through the continual presence of its powerful controlling voice: that of the older narrator, Ishmael.

In *Narrative Situations in the Novel*, Franz Stanzel shows how crucial the narrative persona and voice is for any novel and calls *Moby-Dick* a revolutionary, "multileveled, multifaceted work which makes use of almost all the formal possibilities of this novel form" (70). Melville, he says, differentiates the way he uses Ishmael from, for example, the way Henry Fielding and Charles Dickens use their famous narrators. The narrator of Fielding's *Tom Jones* is totally separated from the plot, appearing throughout the work as an outside voice in the first-person inter-chapters. The opening sentence of Dickens' *Great Expectations*, "My father's family name being Pirrip . . . I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip" (1), reminds us of Melville's opening gambit. The important difference, however, is that Dickens' older narrator remains closely aligned with his younger self, unlike Melville's Ishmael who is altogether different, which adds a more complicated, richer texture to Melville's narrative.

Melville had experimented using first-person narrators in various ways in each of his first five books. His sixth book, *Moby-Dick*, is different. He not only gives this narrator a name that is well outside the theology of his Dutch Reformed forebears and baptism, but one that carries a good deal of romantic, exotic, even Islamic baggage. The narrative begins with a start: "Call me Ishmael" (21).¹ Although this three-word imperative that begins the novel proper comes as a surprise, it doesn't take the careful reader very long to realize that it's a clue to the whole book, displayed in full view, in the most obvious spot, almost a comic challenge to separate the sheep from the literate goats, so to speak.

Narrator Ishmael, as opposed to sailor Ishmael, then begins to trip along in his engaging, casual manner: "Some years ago—never mind how long precisely—having little or no money in my purse" (21). In this novel's second sentence, we begin to note the difference between the carefree, witty narrator and the despondent, down-in-the-mouth, young man he's describing, the one with "damp, drizzly November" numbing his soul (21). In the short opening chapter alone, the older, more mature Ishmael happily carries us back chronologically to the ancient Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans and geographically across our ever-widening country, with a side-glance to China and other exotic realms. At the outset of what is perhaps the first truly global novel ever written, Ishmael's perspective is so comprehensive and Protean that he can allude to the most pressing issues of his own day, such as slavery and the 1848 election (23-24), and at the same time imagine some of the pressing issues of our own day, such as Black Lives Matter: "Who ain't a slave? Tell me that" (23) and the awkward Postcolonial reverberations in Afghanistan (24). His touch is so light and clever, his mind moves so easily and fluidly, that after mining both the Old and New Testaments on the evils of money—"infliction that two orchards thieves entailed upon us" and "a monied man" denied heaven (24)—he can effortlessly glide into an elaborate joke about farting: Pythagoras's warning that eating too many beans will cause "winds from astern" (24).

The mature Ishmael makes it clear from the outset that he has learned much that the weebegone youngster he's writing about hasn't yet realized. Listen to how sharply he stoically differentiates himself from that morose young sailor:

What of it, if some old hunks of a sea-captain orders me to get a broom and sweep down the decks? What does that indignity amount to, weighed, I mean, in the scales of the New Testament? . . . Well, then, however the old sea-captains may order me about . . . the universal thump is passed around, and all hands should rub each other's shoulder-blades, and be content. (23-24)

By the end of the ironically named, short first chapter, "Loomings," narrator Ishmael has already become our wise, winsome, trusting friend. Such companions are rare. Only a foolish, hurried reader would willingly leave his company.

Fifteen chapters that focus with laser-like precision on individual parts or aspects of whales are spread out between chapters 32 and 105. One might initially wonder if Melville included them simply to pad out his text to some prescribed length for one of his publishers, Harper & Brothers in New York or Richard Bentley in London. To be sure, Melville cribbed much of the material in those "whaling chapters" from Beale, Scorsby, and others in the *Penny Cyclopaedia*. On first reading, those chapters might seem dull because Ishmael *seems* to disappear—and some readers race on, like Ahab, toward the exciting battle royale. That's a mistake. When Ishmael simply parks what we might call the surface narrative to cover endless details about every conceivable part of the whale, from the transparent isinglass layer covering his blubber down to his skeleton, not excluding the forehead and penis, the information we get is nowhere as interesting or as important as the person doing the telling and the way he tells it. In the whaling chapters we are completely free of that mad captain and pesky whale and fully immersed in the fascinating, capacious mind of one Ishmael.

The first whaling chapter that greets us is chapter 32, "Cetology." It is by far the longest—and therefore potentially the dullest—of the lot, covering all kinds of information about twenty-six different species of whales. Just beneath the cetological surface, however, Ishmael cunningly and gleefully scampers about, revealing his enticing, unpredictable, dazzling mind. He keeps us interested in the midst of that dull typology floating so prominently on the top in several ways:

1. In the opening sentence of "Cetology" Ishmael reminds us—as he does countless other times in other chapters—that we're part of the journey, willing accomplices rather than inert listeners: "Already *we* are boldly launched upon the deep; but soon *we* shall be lost in its unshored, harborless immensities" (133 *emphasis mine*).

2. Like Virgil leading Dante through the *Commedia*, Ishmael is here the perfect guide through the challenging circles and sub-circles—books and chapters—of whales. Always knowing what we're feeling, always anticipating what questions loom before us, he regularly stops to answer our questions before we can ask them, putting us at ease. After the opening sentence of this chapter we might wonder if we really need to know the mountainous information looming ahead. So in the second sentence he tells us it is "well to attend to" these masses of details so that we can more thoroughly understand and appreciate "the more special leviathanic revelations and allusions of all sorts which are to follow" (133). Who would *not* pay attention to be better prepared for revelations and allusions of all sorts about to come? We keep turning the pages.

3. There are way too many varieties of whales living in the "harborless immensities" of the oceans for us to get our minds around: "no ordinary letter-sorter

in the Post Office is equal to it" (134). As Aristotle knew when he surveyed and analyzed data collected from all over the world, we mortals need some clear, instantly recognizable, overall system, some scheme for the sorting. Knowing what is particularly appropriate for us book-readers, Ishmael divides the whale multitudes into three categories of books (three being easier to remember than four), according to their most obvious difference, the size of the pages and therefore the magnitude of the books: "BOOKS (subdivisible into CHAPTERS)": "I. The FOLIO WHALE; II. The OCTAVO WHALE; III. The DUODECIMO WHALE" (136). Capitalizing all the letters in these three basic headings emphasizes and clearly differentiates them for our feeble memories.

4. Even with the capitalized categories, how are we to make sense of, much less remember, the twenty-six different kinds of whales swimming around in one of the longest chapters in the novel? Ishmael's extraordinarily rich imagination makes that possible, at least for the several kinds of whales that seem most important to him. One example here may suffice. He initially dubs the DUODECIMO porpoise the "Huzza Porpoise" because groups of them swim in "hilarious shoals" and keep "tossing themselves to heaven like caps in a Fourth-of-July crowd" (141). We then find it easy to enrich this celebratory, patriotic image of tossing Fourth-of-July caps with related images. The small Huzza porpoises are "lads that always live before the wind," are "vivacious," and "will yield you one good gallon of good oil" (141). Because these porpoises have tiny, indiscernible spouts, Ishmael ends their description with an unexpected comparison and a personal invitation: "the next time you have a chance, watch him; and *you will see* the great Sperm whale himself in miniature" (141 *emphasis mine*).

5. At the end of the breathlessly comprehensive *Song of Myself*, Walt Whitman justifies the contradictions of his multiple approaches: "I am large, I contain multitudes" (88). Ishmael is larger. He sees all things from all sides. For example, he has the deepest admiration for authorities and scholars—and at the same time a healthy and comical suspicion of them. Beginning in the opening chapter "Loomings," he shows his ambidextrous ability by cleverly contrasting an informal, spoken, breezy style that relies on short, Anglo-Saxon words, "Who ain't a slave? Tell me that" (23-24), with the more Latinate (or actual Latin) language used by philosophers and scholars,—such as the consumptive usher and sub-sub librarian of the pre-narrative "Etymology" and "Extracts" sections (7-19). In "Cetology," he often plays off these two strands of English against one another. After citing Linnaeus' 18th-century Latin description that differentiates whales from fish, "penum intranten feminam mammis lactantem" (135; translation "a penis that enters the female, who gives milk from teats" 513), he tells us that Charley Coffin, one of his messmate buddies, "profanely hinted [that the Latin description was] humbug" (135). Ishmael then leaves us with an easily remembered summary: "To be short, then, a whale is a *spouting fish with a horizontal tail*. There you have him" (135).

6. The English translation above of Linnaeus's Latin reminds us of Ishmael's lively Rabelaisian side. Phallic jokes are certainly not inappropriate in a novel named *Moby-Dick* where seamen pursue sperm whales. Ishmael, however, is clever and sophisticated enough to make crude, junior-high, locker-room banter rise to a much higher level. A few years ago a student sheepishly asked me if there could possibly be some hidden meaning in the sign in chapter 2 that the morose young sailor spies: "The Spouter-Inn:—Peter Coffin" (27). I simply smiled and walked away. In "Cetology," Ishmael's phallic joke comes in his description of the strange Narwhale that sports a single tusk growing out of the left side of its jaw. Ishmael tells us that as Sir Martin Frobisher's ship sailed up the Thames returning from a voyage,

‘Queen Bess did gallantly wave her jeweled hand to him from a window of Greenwich Palace’ and ‘on bended knees he presented to her highness a prodigious long horn of the Narwhale.’ . . . An Irish author avers that the Earl of Leicester, on bended knees, did likewise present to her highness another horn, pertaining to a land beast of the unicorn nature. (140)

7. As we saw in the opening chapter, Ishmael’s endlessly curious, encyclopedic mind moves spontaneously, easily, fluidly across geography, disciplines, and time; his ubiquitous mind is boundless. At the beginning of “Cetology” he quickly mentions the two cetological sources he most drew from for his whaling chapters: Captain William Scoresby and Surgeon Beale. He then names the next rank of scholars important to him: the paleontologist George Cuvier, the anatomist John Hunter, and the zoologist René Lesson. Then with a slight, sideways smile, he tells us that “though of real knowledge there be little, yet of books there are a plenty” before unleashing a ridiculously long, scattershot list that includes “The Authors of the Bible; Aristotle; Pliny; Aldrovandi; Sir Thomas Browne; Gesner; Ray; Linnaeus; Rondeletius,” and twenty-one others (133)! We’re not even certain if these are all actual people, since he sometimes mixes the imagined with the real, as he hilariously does later when he mentions Fogo Von Slack (364) and Fitz Swackhammer (393). Ishmael could—and does—out-google Google; we needn’t bother ourselves with *National Geographic*, *The Britannica*, Edward Gibbon, or Rick Steves. At the end of the long list cited above, we breathe a sigh of relief—with a more nuanced and intelligent understanding of “expert” sources.

8. Though Ishmael’s mastery of known and hypothetical whale knowledge is overwhelmingly weighty, his self-deprecating modesty leavens any heaviness. For example, in the chapter on the whale’s tail, after a highly detailed listing of its five great motions he admits to us that “the more I consider this mighty tail, the more do I deplore my inability to express it. . . . Dissect him how I may, then, I got but skin deep. I know him not, and never will” (338). In “Cetology,” after saying that no one has yet attempted to classify all whales, he states: “I hereupon offer my own poor endeavors. I promise nothing complete; because any human thing supposed to be complete, must for that very reason infallibly be faulty” (134).

9. Think of “Cetology” and most other whaling chapters as Westerns. Ishmael rides in bravely on a horse with guns-a-blazing, takes potshots all around, and then quickly dashes out without any resolution, often exiting with a joke to cover his escape. At the end of the chapter on the skin of the whale (68, “The Blanket”) he exits via the Vatican: “Of erections, how few are domed like St. Peter’s!” (278). He ends “Cetology” by throwing up his hands, admitting defeat, and ironically asking forgiveness: “God help me from ever completing anything. This whole book is but a draught—nay, but the draught of a draught. Oh, Time, Strength, Cash, and Patience!” (142). Of course we forgive him.

Finally, you might well ask, how can this Ishmael be a continuing presence when he absolutely and completely disappears, as he particularly does in the several fully dramatic chapters, such as 108, “The Deck: Ahab and the Carpenter” (411-414)? The short answer here is that, yes, Ishmael does completely disappear from time to time in the fully dramatic chapters. But when he temporarily suspends his presence, we willingly suspend our disbelief “for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith,” as Samuel Taylor Coleridge believes happens whenever we experience an aesthetically powerful drama, poem, or literary work (6). Put another way, Ishmael seems to us both omniscient and omnipresent, even when he’s backstage,

furiously—though effortlessly—writing and directing the scene on the front of the stage. We know where he is and are totally in his hands, and his amazing mind.

Hershel Parker, Melville's comprehensive, magisterial biographer, edited the 2018 Norton Critical edition of *Moby-Dick*. One of the few critical articles he included in the back was Walter Bezanson's early article, "The Dynamic of *Moby-Dick*: Ishmael's Voices." In a footnote to the article, Parker called it "still the most eloquent 'evocation' of the mature and the younger Ishmael" (663). In the article, Bezanson calls Ishmael "the real center of meaning and the defining force of the novel" and said that we are "under the spell" of his "magic voice" (663-64). Alas, Bezanson's insights have been largely forgotten by the critics. When we test those insights by taking a closer look at "Loomings" and "Cetology" we can see the wisdom of Bezanson's point and begin to understand why the novel has been so resilient. Bezanson's insight could be tested in the vast majority of the 133 remaining chapters of *Moby-Dick*, but that would be a much longer exercise. Oh Time, Strength, Cash, and Patience!

Understanding Ishmael as the key to the continuing appeal of *Moby-Dick* may even help us survive the COVID-19 era. We know that as a solitary young man, the sailor Ishmael sets out to sea to avoid throwing himself on his sword, like Cato (21). The young sailor then suffers the loss of his one friend, Queequeg, and the death of all thirty-some of his shipmates. Yet, listening to him, we know that he has not only survived, he has prevailed and become an engaging, accepting, optimistic, fascinating, lively, winsome presence for us. Exactly how this came about is not in the purview of this essay. But from being continually in Ishmael's presence, we know that, like the Catskill eagle, he can now soar into the highest sunny spaces (376) and like the Narwhale, dive down into the darkest deeps (139-140). Along with these extraordinary feats, he provides us valuable, common-sense, practical advice. In chapter 94, "A Squeeze of the Hand," he writes that "by many prolonged, repeated experiences" he has stoically learned that "in all cases man must eventually lower, or at least shift, his conceit of attainable felicity; not placing it anywhere in the intellect or the fancy; but in the wife, the heart, the bed, the table, the saddle, the fire-side, the country" (369).

In the only two meaningful post-*Pequod* glimpses Ishmael reveals about himself, we see that he has adjusted his conceit of attainable felicity. In the timespan between the moment he becomes the only one "escaped alone to tell thee" (500) and some years later when he's writing the novel, we see him, significantly both times, relaxing with friends. These glimpses come in chapter 102, "A Bower in the Arsacides," when he is on holiday with "my late royal friend Tranquo, king of Tranque" (395), and in chapter 54, "The Town Ho's Story," when we see him drinking and "smoking upon the thick-gilt tiled piazza of the Golden Inn" with his Spanish friends as they listen to his story (222). These two post-*Pequod* glimpses are not without meaning—nor is the fact that he is spending time with his friends of different ranks and ethnicities.

In 1853, after the embarrassing and total commercial failure of *Moby-Dick* and then *Pierre*, Melville published "Bartleby, the Scrivener," whose unnamed narrator is as interesting as the story from his past that he relates. In 1898, in Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw," a similarly ambiguous narrator narrates the main portion of a ghost tale from her past. But these two later narrators are flawed, self-deceived about the nature of their own characters and their own compromised roles in the stories they relate. The all-knowing narrator Ishmael is anything but self-deceived or compromised. We willingly, unabashedly, and joyfully revel in his capacious, godlike mind.

The only negative thing I would ever dare utter to Ishmael's incomparable creator is this: "You misnamed your novel. Forget that whale. Call it Ishmael."

Notes

¹ All primary text citations to the novel are from *Moby-Dick*, edited by John Bryant and Haskell Springer, Longman Critical Edition, 2007. The opening sentence of the narrative, "Call me Ishmael" (21) appears following the introductory material in "Etymology and "Extracts" (7-19).

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Onomastic Play in Barbara Kingsolver's *Unsheltered*

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Most who dabble in literary criticism know that names matter, often substantively so. For instance, James Oliver Rigney, Jr., took the pen name Robert Jordan from the hero of Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (Livingston). Sometimes an author's choice of name for a character is a more overt indication of character's essence, such as Sir Benjamin Backbite from Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*, or allegorical as in the case of Redcrosse, aka Saint George, who represents holiness in Spenser's *The Faerie Queen*.

Barbara Kingsolver uses several allusory names in her 2018 novel, *Unsheltered*. These names connect to a range of associations, from Greek mythology to American literary history. A study of her naming technique reveals thematic insights, in particular that our mania for housing is at the expense of the environment. In brief, *Unsheltered* is two parallel stories of characters who face changes in their lives in great measure due to the difficulties that their shelters become.

Kingsolver creates a naming strategy that leads up to an explanation of the name of one of her major characters, Willa, near the end of the novel, and that association ties her to a solution to the sheltering crisis. That solution amounts to being less dependent on our shelters. Shelter is one of the three most basic necessities in life. It sits next to food and water to remind us of our fragility in nature. We need food and water daily, frequently, but shelter is another matter. Kingsolver leads us to question our dependence on shelters, implying that our past habits in sheltering ourselves have grown way past our needs, resulting in wastefulness that is compromising our environment. The upshot of Kingsolver's novel is the depiction of shelter gone bad, shelter that defeats us—if we let it.

It bears mentioning that Kingsolver was trained as a scientist and naturally is interested in environmental sustainability, or the lack thereof. She would, I believe, be comfortable in crediting entropy for the cause of the difficulties that both Willa Knox and her predecessor, Thatcher Greenwood, endure as homeowners. Before launching her career as a novelist, essayist, and poet, Kingsolver studied biology, earning a master's degree in ecology and evolutionary biology. She was a "scientific writer" for the University of Arizona (Kingsolver "Autobiography") and often invests her fiction with issues related to biological processes, such as the path of migratory monarch butterflies in *Flight Behavior*, or the habits of hermit crabs in *High Tide in Tucson*.

In *Unsheltered*, the main characters living in the present century inhabit an inherited house that is falling apart. The house needs more repair than the family can afford, and therefore their shelter is threatened by entropy, becoming a tangible example of entropy itself. The novel also relates the story of another set of

characters living in a house on the same location, but well over 140 years earlier. That house had also become dilapidated, causing strife in the household. The contemporary owners believe it is the same house. To their chagrin, they later find out that it is not the same structure.

In the earlier era Thatcher Greenwood is a public-school teacher in Vineland, New Jersey, an experimental utopian community founded on a large portion of missionary Christian zeal. He is a man of science, which he argues should guide us instead of faith, or rather that we should have faith in facts, knowledge, and understanding. The village leaders follow a more traditional authoritarian line—it all being God’s plan. The town’s leaders are unhappy that he gives credence to the Darwinian concepts of natural selection and adaptation, and that he intends on teaching such to the Vineland school children. Orbiting Thatcher are his demanding wife, his dissatisfied mother-in-law, a troublesome sister-in-law, and unexpectedly Mary Treat, a neighbor who is a self-taught naturalist conducting experiments and exchanging letters with other scientists, including Darwin.

Kingsolver is politically savvy. The restrictive and oppressive leaders of Thatcher’s utopian community parallel the then newly elected Trump administration. The book’s title reverberates with the social problems of 2016, and still today: economic hardship leading to homelessness, immigration restriction and the separation of families, and the feeling of being unprotected from the storms of governmental abuse. In some usages, to shelter is to seek protection, to perceive a threat and hide from it. In recent months, we have learned “to shelter in place,” because to go outside is to risk infection, illness, and death.

In the earlier narrative, Kingsolver draws on history to tell the story of the town leader, Charles K. Landis, who shoots the newsman and political opponent Uri Carruth, and gets away with murder by claiming temporary insanity; in the election era of 2016, then-candidate Trump boasted: “I could stand in the middle of 5th Avenue and shoot somebody and I wouldn’t lose voters” (Diamond). Carruth was a political opponent who was the editor of a newspaper that challenged Landis’ dominance in the community and spoofed him, which is an earlier version of a divided press similar to today’s Fox/OAN versus MSNBC/CNN dynamic. The scholar and literary critic Merve Emre calls *Unsheltered* “The first U.S. novel to treat the 2016 election at length.”

Some readers, such as *The Observer*’s Benjamin Evans, have been concerned that the solution to the problem of climate change, as indicated in the novel, is rather grim and the novel does not suggest potential future survival. They interpret the two parallel stories as emphasizing that our shelters will not save us; they believe that the upshot of the novel is that we are doomed. Others, such as Ron Charles, see hope in that if we survived the problems of Thatcher’s era, we might survive the maelstroms of Willa’s and ours, too. Meg Wolitzer in the *NYT* believes that humanity will find sufficient shelter in spite of the obstacles we face. Ilana Masad points out that the characters’ attitudes at the end of the novel are hopeful and joyous. Willa, a writer and journalist, is collecting notes for a biography of Mary Treat. She is happy to return to researching and writing, and clearly is acting the way Kingsolver did in producing this novel. The baby, Dusty, is beginning to walk, suggesting positive development. Willa’s daughter, Tig, is living with Jorge from the robust Hispanic family next door, and is happy to take on the task of raising Dusty. Though unsheltered from the former shambles of houses, none of the characters is compromised—they are all moving on.

Kingsolver chooses unusual names for her characters, and makes this an emphatic aspect of her storytelling. The name “Willa” seems to suggest someone with a strong will, and we see her persevering against a sea of troubles: she is

contending with her son's recent loss of his wife to suicide due to post-partum depression, caring for her newborn grand-child, and dealing with the son's venture-capital plans, her daughter's unsettled lifestyle, her husband's professorial popularity among the throng of coeds he teaches, his efforts to become tenured, her father-in-law's COPD illness, a lack of financial resources, and then the dilapidated house. That it is the same first name as the author Willa Cather does not seem to connect in any meaningful way until much later in the novel when the name connects to the entropy theme. As the names become increasingly improbable, the reader becomes prepared for the Cather connection. Willa's children's names, though, more clearly reflect onomastic play early in the novel. Kingsolver presents these names in an order that suggests increasingly overt authorial intrusion—starting out with seemingly normal names, but becoming more and more astounding, till she circles back on Willa and reveals a connection with entropy of a sort.

Kingsolver nudges us to recognize the importance of names in this story by first giving us Willa's daughter, who goes by "Tig." The name could derive from various sources, but it is a surprise to the reader to find a character named for Antigone, the tragic figure out of Sophocles, circa 442 BC. Willa has married a Greek man, Iano Tavoularis, who saw no irony in naming his daughter for the feisty heroine who stands up to a tyrannical Creon and dies entombed with his son. Iano is a professor of political science, and Willa chides him for not paying attention to or not knowing that nobody had been named Antigone since ancient times. It is uncertain whether Kingsolver consulted the *Urban Dictionary* online, but it indicates that "iano" is code for "that young man is hot," which corroborates Willa's concern that the coed girls find her husband attractive. Willa threw herself at him, physically, when they first met, and she still lusts for him. Other sources indicate that "tavoularis" is cognate with the Greek for an amanuensis or secretary, the name deriving from tabula or tablet ("Tavoularis"), and in the novel Willa's husband spends much of his time helping Willa, though not with her writing projects, as much with family life. This all simply reveals that Kingsolver is quite careful in orchestrating her characters' names.

Though Tig is a short, scrappy firecracker of a woman who has a troubled relationship with her brother, Zeke, all she otherwise shares with the legendary character of ancient Greece is a penchant for protest, and a tendency to see the establishment as faulty. "Zeke" is not a Greek name, but instead from Hebrew, short for Ezekiel, which implies a strengthening from God ("Ezekiel"). He is the polar opposite of Tig, arguing for an open financial market and advocating for what amounts to capitalist greed. Early in the novel (chapter 3, "Investigations"), the family is gathered for dinner and falls into a heated debate over politics and economics. One of Emre's criticisms of the novel is that the speeches are unbelievable, too contrived, "sound bites masquerading as human beings." This might be attributable to the characters' near-allegorical natures, as their names position them to be comparable to their antecedent namesakes. Iano and Willa's son, Zeke, and Iano's wheelchair-bound father, Nick, are ardent, rabid conservatives, prone to hear conspiracy theories and support the President who is conspicuously not named in the novel.

Not surprisingly, some of Kingsolver's readers are uncomfortable with how contemporary politics inform the plot of the novel. Politically conservative readers and perhaps Trump supporters find the depictions oppose their views. In contrast, liberal readers believe that the political commentary does not go far enough. Emre asserts that *Unsheltered* "is so busy flaunting its timeliness that it misses the underlying political and economic strains that have brought the country to this pass."

Trump is not named in the novel, but instead is referred to as “the Bullhorn.” In a book full of resonating names, it is certainly a political statement that Kingsolver does not include his name, though that name itself is full of implication. To put it perhaps whimsically, if writing a novel is in any way like playing a card game, such as Bridge, Kingsolver bids no-Trump.

Late in the novel, the name of our present-day protagonist, Willa, connects her to the novel's concern over entropy. This is a motif occurring throughout, most often expressed by Tig—a terrifying potential future of environmental disaster, for all of us:

“Mom. The permafrost is melting. Millions of acres of it . . .” Tig shook her head. “It’s so, so scary. It’s going to be fire and rain, Mom. Storms we can’t deal with, so many people homeless. Not just homeless, but placeless. Cities go underwater and then what? You can’t shelter in place anymore when there isn’t a place.” (409)

Willa is uncertain about Tig’s concerns, understanding herself to be complacent, and learning from Tig that her stance is shaky at best.

The two main characters share in a science-based mindset. The name “Thatcher” is unusual, but the novel explains that this Thatcher Greenwood was given his name by a mother who had been indecisive about naming him. She chose the name when looking out a window during his birth, and referred out loud to the men working on re-thatching the neighboring roof. His name is one of two that more specifically connote housing construction, the roofing over one’s head. His wife is Rose Greenwood, and she is prickly like the flowering Rose plant—a character whom Thatcher has to handle carefully. The neighbor of his declining house, Mary Treat, was an actual historical person, “a nineteenth-century biologist whose work deserves to be better known” (Kingsolver *Unsheltered* 463).¹

Willa believes the house had belonged to Thatcher, and sees the historical fact as a lifeline sent from the past, because the fame of his story may yield support in the costs for repairing her home as a recognized historic structure. When she learns instead that Thatcher’s house was demolished and a new one constructed, she finds it best to allow hers, too, to be razed, the pieces sold off to pay for the demolition. The bricks happen to be rare and thus can help pay for the work in bringing the house down. She and Thatcher both become unsheltered.

Because Kingsolver has inserted so many reverberating names in these pages, the name Willa seems bland in comparison. That is, when Tig’s name as Antigone is uncovered, it sits with others that seem heavily associative, perhaps even allegorical. Zeke’s live-in girlfriend is named Helene, which is close to the demi-goddess Helen of the Trojan War—he is enamored of her to the extent he tries to trap her in the relationship by fathering a child, which they name Aldus after Helene’s father, but who they call “Dusty.” Iano explains to Willa that the name Aldus means “from the old house” (170). They connect that name to the dust from the house that falls and settles, thus the child is dusty from the remains of the house. This is the second house-related name.

When Helene commits suicide at the beginning of the novel, she leaves Dusty with Zeke, who briefly moves home with Willa, Iano, and sister Tig. We later learn that Tig had an affair with a man named Toto, short for Aristotle. He has a sister named Athena. When we come to characters named the same as goddesses or influential philosophers, it is difficult not to goggle over the potential associations. If phenomenological or reader-response perspectives have value, here is where the

readers' reactions would be worth considering. Presumably they become hypersensitized to the novel's name-play.

Kingsolver draws further attention to the strangeness of the names when Willa tells Iano that one of his nubile coeds came looking for him at home earlier in the day. She tells him that "Gwendolen" came by, assuming he would be there and not his wife and daughter and grandchild. Iano realizes she got the name wrong and it was instead a student named Guinevere. Willa replies, saying: "You can't be serious. Are women *trying* to give their children ridiculous names?" (235). She knows Iano is not entirely above infidelity, and that is exactly what Guinevere of legend was famous for—her affair with Lancelot.

When Willa points to these "ridiculous" names, it is a meta-reference in that of course it is Kingsolver who has created most of the surprising names, most frequently from ancient Greek culture. The reflexive situation begs us to ask: why is Kingsolver giving her characters extremely unusual names?

In one instance, Kingsolver provides a more significant name-connection, and spells it out more emphatically than she does for any other character's name. The other wild names have sensitized the readers and prepared them for the entropic conclusion. In preparing to empty the house before it is destroyed, Willa finds a scrap of paper that contains a passage from Willa Cather's, *My Antonia*, her mother's favorite book. Her mother wanted Willa to read the passage at her funeral. Presumably, the mother named her daughter Willa in homage to the author of her favorite book. The excerpt on the rediscovered paper containing Cather's words advances a particular perspective about death: "I did not want to be anything more. I was entirely happy. Perhaps we feel like that when we die and become part of something entire . . . dissolved into something complete and great" (Cather, qtd in Kingsolver 447). It is the transcendentalist concept as rooted in William Cullen Bryant's poem, "Thanatopsis," a deist notion of merger with the physical universe.

Willa had forgotten this request from her mother, even though it was one of the few things her mother had asked of her. She only realizes her lapse at this moment. She is distraught in realizing her omission. Tig tries to console her grief-stricken mother by telling her she had too many things to keep track of at the time of the death, but Willa tellingly responds: "No . . . It was here in this box, with these completely unrelated things that weren't important to me, inside other boxes of completely unrelated things. I had too many things. Just too much goddamn stuff" (448). The clutter she is contending with is a part of the house that is disintegrating before her eyes. The clutter and house are too much. Apparently, we can have too much shelter.

Willa is thus emphatically shown to share her name with Willa Cather, and the passage she had neglected proves a key to the problem of what to do about the troubled, ruined shelters the characters endure. The characters should let them dissolve away. The shelters cannot be trusted; better that the characters not depend on them for much. Willa has been trying to hold onto material possessions, of which the house is dominant, and problematic. Though the naming in the novel is wildly creative, in this instance the name's meaning is expanded and given place. Not so with the occasional Athenas and Aristotles that are peppered throughout the text—we are not given this much more to consider about them. They are included in order to sensitize the reader for the Cather passage mentioned above.

The houses in each situation turn out to be false shelters. Tig is the voice of conscience, suggesting that Willa and the family need to move on. She says:

"Everybody your age is, like, crouching inside this box made out of what they already believe. You think it's a fallout shelter or something but it's a piece of

shit box, Mom. It's cardboard, drowning in the rain, going all floppy. And you're saying, 'This is all there is, it will hold up fine. This box will keep me safe!'" (308)

Tig confronts Willa with the reasoning that she must forget about saving the house, and broadens the logic to make an indictment against her generation, the baby-boomers who are too bent on materialism, too fond of houses and green lawns. She says new eyes are needed, that the younger generation should step in and take control for the sake of a sustainable future. This message is corroborated in the author's afterword. There Kingsolver waxes concerned over the potential end-times, due to climate change, and writes: "Whether it's really the end, or the dawning of an unrecognizable new day, it amounts to the same thing: when the rules of the past no longer help with navigating the future, it feels like the sky is falling" (466).

In the end, Willa and Iano move into an apartment. He has been assured that even though tenure isn't possible anymore, he will have continued employment until he reaches retirement. Her daughter, Tig, lives in a cottage that was reputedly on site in Vineland back in Thatcher's day. It is tiny, a downsizing from past living arrangements. She takes on the rearing of her nephew, and that timeline ends with Dusty struggling to learn how to walk. The last pages return us to Thatcher Greenwood and Mary Treat, as he prepares to leave Vineland in exile, divorced from his wife and his former family's interest in societal elevation. He is off on a scientific expedition to the Western territories, while Treat is planning to winter in the swampy ecosystem of coastal northern Florida. She suggests he meet her there when he is done with his travels, implying that they will share in a love that had been brewing all through the novel. Though Kingsolver did not invent the name Treat, her Thatcher Greenwood character is admirable in holding to his principles, and it is fitting that his reward, his Treat, awaits him at the end of the book.

The tiny-home movement, the idea of downsizing, is becoming a powerful choice for many. Both Thatcher and Willa come to realize that their houses are millstones weighing them down. There is no expression from either of them that shows great love for these structures. Perhaps they do not constitute a nemesis, but they are like the things that Willa found in her way, part of the "too much goddamned stuff" that kept her from correctly performing last rites for her mother. Tig and Willa come to understand each other at the end of that narrative:

"Poor Mama," she [Tig] said, leaning her springy head against Willa's shoulder . . . "it's not the end of the world. There's some other place to go . . . it's okay because without all that crap overhead, you're standing in the daylight . . . What you have to do is look for blue sky" (415).

Tig advocates for change, for a shift from overzealous mania in housing to more modest and communal ways of living. She is fully convinced that the current habits and emphases are causing the environmental catastrophes of drought and storm. Hurricane (aka Superstorm) Sandy is referenced more than once in the novel. At one point, Tig challenges her mother's wastefulness, saying that she doesn't even realize how inefficient and environmentally unsustainable are her habits. Willa admits she is a hoarder and that Tig is probably correct.

These last words in the Unexpected Reserves chapter, "blue sky," become the title of the next chapter. Kingsolver has created this dynamic all through the novel, even with the ultimate last words of the novel becoming the first title for chapter one. The effect is of a corona pattern, suggesting a crown rather like John Donne's

poetic vision among his holy sonnets, his “La Corona” poems. The container of these parallel narratives is meant to be seen as a pattern implying coronation, to raise and ennoble the story and indicate the ascendance and regality of life freed from excessive shelter. In this vision, to be unsheltered is to be liberated. That is the point of the last sentence of the novel, too, which ends with the earlier-era narrative of Thatcher Greenwood’s plans to leave: “He would escape with his life before the dust had settled on the collapse of his falling house” (461). To escape catastrophe seems cautiously optimistic at the least.

Notes

¹All primary text citations that follow are from the 2018 Harper-Collins publication of *Unsheltered*.

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Enigmatic Allusion: Exotic Names and Disturbing Curiosities in Salman Rushdie's *The Golden House*

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Salman Rushdie's novel *The Golden House* concerns one Nero Golden, a wealthy immigrant from Bombay, who fled to New York City in year 2008 to escape from the Muslim mobster Zamzama Alankar, godfather of the so-called Z Company, for whom he had performed illegal financial services and crafted occasional nefarious arrangements, facilitating the notorious terror attack on the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Mumbai, in which his own wife was killed. This novel brings together two concurrent calamitous narratives: the story of the tragic downfall of the House of Golden and the chaotic misadventure of the election of Donald Trump, which mirror each other to produce a sort of historical pageant of doom that the author clearly sees as the tenor of contemporary life in America and perhaps in the world at large. Moreover, the author envelops these narratives in a network of historical and literary allusions proceeding from the names of his characters, those of the Golden family and the narrator, and from select curiosities, notably an imperial phallus and an arcane biblical passage, that lead us to a redemptive ending where hope is restored by means of "one meaningful deed" (*The Golden House* 160).

When the novel was published in 2017, it was given a lukewarm reception in the initial reviews of the American literary establishment. Some saw it as awash in a sea of references to American popular culture: the cinema, the comic-book lore of Marvel superheroes and villains, the debate over transsexuality, and the culture of upscale Greenwich Village in New York (Begley 56-7). Others said its characters were not credible, especially the narrator, who begins in a straightforward vein and becomes more digressive and hyperbolic as his story approaches its catastrophic ending (Beck 46). Rushdie countered these accusations by claiming to have aimed for a new kind of realism, "Operatic Realism," that seeks the highly emotional impact of grand opera (Resano 15; Tuttle). However, just as it seemed that *The Golden House* might be deemed a melodramatic farce, it garnered the attention of two very current literary inquiries: the debate on the emerging corpus of "Trump fiction" and the examination of organized crime in the era of transnational neoliberal capitalism, in this instance ranging from Mumbai to New York City.

Dolores Resano offers a thorough assessment of the "Trump fiction" phenomenon and the unique perspective on *The Golden House* as a work in which the titular edifice and its criminal owner are destroyed while the Trump election of 2016 constitutes a parallel societal collapse, morally and politically, the end of the Obama era of misleading optimism and faith in the liberal ideals of liberty, equality, and social progress. Resano asserts that the narrator moves from "naturalistic logic

. . . to turn to the superhero logic of the comic-book universe . . . a world where people ‘are ruled by cartoons’” (17), notably the comic villain known as the Joker and his absurd retinue. “In other words,” she concludes, “the novel seems to be arguing that it is the self-deception during the Obama years that ‘has given us the age of Trump’” (18).

Michael K. Walonen, in contrast, focuses on the criminal organization to which Nero Golden belonged in Mumbai, arguing that the story illustrates the “systematically interwoven nature” of organized crime and legitimate capitalist enterprise (97). Nero Golden, he observes, is both a legitimate real estate mogul and investor and a money launderer and “bag man” for Z Company, a man whose legal and illicit affairs are intertwined. He and his sons travel under assumed names, hoping to remain unknown in America and beyond the reach of Z Company in Mumbai, but the new leaders of the Indian mafia catch up with him and burn his Golden House to the ground, killing him and his new wife (Walonen 104-5). Thus we are given to understand that in the new age of neoliberal capitalism, the scope of organized crime has become global, even more effective world-wide than the national authorities.

Both of these academic domains are replete with impressive books and articles, and both have welcomed *The Golden House* into their respective forums, thereby giving the novel a substantial place in the current field of historical, political, and sociological concerns. But in each instance the novel itself is surrendered to the overriding importance of the issues at hand: what is the meaning of the Trump ascendancy, and how shall entrepreneurial capitalism endure in its compromised condition, permeated by organized crime and tainted by vice at all levels? My purpose in this essay is to put the focus back on the novel and its characters by exploring the allusions inherent in their names and in various references that reveal their motives and inner beings. Rushdie is a highly allusive writer whose aims are indeed social and political, targeting the broad phenomena of national and international events; yet he is also an artist of personal and psychological interest, often delineating the natures and desires of his characters by suggestion. Interpreting the allusions pertinent to the Golden clan and the Trump escapade as the Joker, I seek to understand their natures as presented in the story.

The Golden Clan

The tragedy of the House of Golden resembles a plot from a Greek tragedy. Golden’s sons, though innocent themselves, all die sacrificial deaths, presumably due to their father’s crimes, a testament to the absurdity of Fate and the relentlessly gruesome power of Justice that governs Rushdie’s irrational universe. Truly, the sins of the father are visited upon the sons in this narrative, so that the father comes to full awareness of his guilt and feels the weight of his punishment in the price paid by his sons. Then and only then is he granted egress from this guilt in the form of the total annihilation of his house and himself in a conflagration of fire and explosion that expiates his sins yet erases any hope of escape and fulfillment he might have had. The whole business is remindful of the deterioration of the Claudian dynasty, culminating in the reign of the debased emperor Nero, who killed both his mother Agrippina and his wife Poppea and who presided over the burning of Rome, after which he rebuilt the city around his *Domus Aurea*, the “Golden House” which gives the novel its title, Nero Golden his name, and the story its theme: the archetypal saga of human degradation, greed, power-lust, and perhaps cleansing apocalypse.

Nero Golden’s three sons may be understood as vectors of the father’s character that he fails to nurture due to his own chosen preoccupation with acquiring wealth

and power through dubious and even criminal means. The three sons are given classical Latin names expressive of their essences. Petronius or Petya, the eldest, named after the reclusive author of the *Satyricon*, depicting the luxury, debauchery, and excess of Nero's Rome, is an introverted autistic intellectual and video game connoisseur, keenly articulate, intuitive and afraid to leave his quarters in the Golden House for most of his adult life. Petya hides in his room inventing video games and making a fortune legally, in contrast to his father who got his pelf illegally. He is briefly liberated by boldly undertaking circumambulation of Manhattan on foot, and later his father Nero gives him an Alpine lynx (Leo), a wishful symbol of his supposed autonomy; but then he is absurdly killed by a traumatized war veteran named Kinski, possibly an agent of a right-wing militia that had abducted and brainwashed him. Petya is gunned down while marching in the Manhattan Halloween parade, impersonating Trimalchio (salubrious host of the *Satyricon*) and accompanied by his personal trainer and guru and by Leo the lynx, who alone escapes the slaughter (303-5). Petya is the ghost of his father's misspent intelligence sacrificed to blithe triviality, which leaves him addled by false confidence and exposed to random violence.

Apuleius or Apu, the artist, lover, and putative "Golden Ass" of the family, suggests Lucius the ass who inspired Shakespeare's ass-eared comical lover Bottom. He exemplifies the dormant creative faculty of the Golden paterfamilias. Apu is a studio artist who specializes in portraits of the New Yorkers who frequent the art galleries and the neighborhood of the reclusive Gardens where Golden House is located in Greenwich Village. His lover is a popular African sculptress, Ubah Tsur, whose monumental steel sculptures are destroyed in the firebombing of the museum where they were on display, an attack launched by the normally pacific Petya out of sheer jealousy because she had chosen Apu as her lover instead of him, though he had never even been bold enough to declare his love for her. Apu and Ubah, naïve Bohemians, are murdered by goondas of Z Company in Bombay, where they are unwisely vacationing as Apu seeks to rediscover his Indian roots. Apu is Nero Golden's repressed aesthetic sensibility, long lost in the hunt for money and status. He may also be emblematic of the artist as victim in the vicious crossfire of revenge in the criminal and political arena, a fate Rushdie himself has had to worry about.¹

The third Golden son, Dionysus, who reduces his name to just D, is the child of a mistress in Bombay, a woman who took her own life after Nero Golden left her behind in the wake of his wife's death and his evacuation to America. Like his divine namesake, D is gender fluid, a condition that fatally confounds him and that meets with the harsh disapproval of Nero Golden.² Consequently, D is ostracized in the Golden House and confides in the narrator, who describes his inner struggle (note that the narrator uses the male pronoun in brackets because he knows D as a man, albeit one suffering the throes of futile transition):

[He] was getting professional help but it didn't really help. [He] kept wanting to argue with the Professional. [He] refused to tell me who the Professional was; instead, [he] used me to vent the frustrations [he] kept to himself around Riya, whose thing was identity, who had dedicated herself to the idea of the transomorphic fluidity of the self, and who sometimes seemed just a little too eager for D's MTF transition to occur, and to be a complete metamorphosis. I should have been able to help [him]. Maybe I could have prevented what happened. Maybe we all could. Or maybe D Golden was just unsuitable for life on earth. (252)

Unlike the renowned god, who is comfortable in his androgynous nature, D struggles to liberate his feminine identity. As a man, he maintains a relationship, both physically and emotionally, with his girlfriend Riya, who champions LGBTQ causes by working at the so-called Museum of Identity in New York City; but he gradually morphs into a female self, who first appears invading the fabulous wardrobe of father Golden's Russian wife and later achieves bizarre womanhood while marching proudly into the Golden House, dressed in her stolen finery, to commit suicide by revolver, thereby announcing herself as the sacrificial daughter, reminiscent of the slaughter of the pure Iphigenia by her ruthless father Agamemnon. Nero Golden, horrified by this event, clearly interprets it, along with the deaths of Petya and Apu, as punishment for his heartlessness and his criminal misdeeds, as he later confesses to D's inconsolable Riya: "You accuse me and I am guilty of it and fate has punished me by taking my children. One child at the hands of my enemies, one by his own hand, one at the hand of a madman, but all three are my punishment and my burden to bear forever, yes, and their mothers too" (345). D may be understood as the wreckage of the authentic self, a fate that Nero Golden also suffers because of his engagement with organized crime and the consequent loss of his wife and flight to America. Nero, despite his wealth and power, cannot become himself, thus he is condemned to witness in the deaths of his three sons the forecast of his own negation.

The Russian Wife and the Telltale Narrator

Irony: Golden's criminal arrangement allowing Zamzama's terrorists to enter Bombay in 2008 led to his first wife's death in the famous hotel they bombed, and in the end these same gangsters cause the explosion and fire that kills him and his second wife, Vasilisa, the Russian femme fatale who had taken over his life and his house and deviously presented him with a son, Vespasian, via secret liaison with the narrator, René Unterlinden. Vespasian, known as Vespa, is aptly named after the first Flavian Roman emperor, who succeeded the Claudian line; thus the implied association of Golden and Claudian, Vespa and Flavian, a transition effected in the novel in the demise of the Golden clan and the rise of a new family in its stead.

Vespa survives the fire, thrown desperately from the burning building by Vasilisa (375), and the narrator, René Unterlinden, finds that he is named guardian of the boy in Nero Golden's will, since Nero knew by that time that Unterlinden was the father. As narrator, Unterlinden stands on fragile moral ground himself. He is invited into the Golden Household by Nero as a resident guest, a peculiar situation rendered morally bankrupt when Vasilisa recruits him as her lover in order to bear a son for Nero Golden in his advanced age so that she and the son will inherit the Golden wealth. The name Vasilisa, which means "beautiful and wise," comes from Slavic folklore; the Russian Vasilisa is a fairytale heroine, sent by her wicked stepmother into the forest where she encounters the archetypal witch Baba Yaga, who engages her in a contest of survival.³ Vasilisa Golden is thus an ironical version of the classic heroine, beautiful and crafty but hardly the virtuous princess of the Slavic folk tales. The narrator justifies his ongoing affair with Vasilisa on grounds that he wants to be near his son once the child is born, but he is also a cinematographer with a monumental project, to write the epic film that will tell the story of the Golden House and its ill-fated master. While these motives are in fact true, it is also the case that he becomes addicted to sex with the Slavic goddess and so becomes a part of the saga himself, not just a privileged observer and detached artist.

Names often bear esoteric meanings in Rushdie's works. Unterlinden may refer to the great central boulevard *Unter den Linden* in Berlin, which became the main

throughway of the city in the 16th century, running from Brandenburg Gate to the Deutsche Museum.⁴ Largely destroyed during World War II, then resurrected in 1990 after the demolition of the Berlin wall, it was the site of many famous landmarks, notably the garden of linden trees that may be suggested by the Greenwich Village Gardens where the Golden House is located and where the narrator himself grew up, the Eden of his childhood which remains his retreat in adulthood throughout the story.

There is also a famous poem entitled “Unter den Linden,” by the 12th century Minnesänger Walther von der Vogelweide. The persona of this lyric, a young girl, tells the story of her secret tryst in a forest beneath a linden tree that she would be ashamed to have anyone know about.⁵ This lyric limns René Unterlinden’s secret affair with Vasilisa Golden, which he conceals for a long time, obviously in fear of the shame and retribution he might suffer should their arrangement become known either to Nero Golden or to René’s girlfriend and fellow cinematographer Suchitra.

However, the name may refer directly to an order of Medieval nuns known for their vow of silence and for their convent Unterlinden in Colmar, France, and its beautiful cloister gardens.⁶ Featured in a recent study of the Daughter Zion allegory by Annette Volting, the Unterlinden nuns cultivated the analogy of the convent as the locus of the Holy Land, the monastery of Mount Zion in Israel: “And so let your bodily convent of Unterlinden be the Holy Land for you” (82).⁷ As such, the cloister and its inhabitants were figuratively the garden of the Virgin Mary, a place of supreme peace, virtue, and perfection. As brides of Christ, they were engaged in a figuratively connubial relationship with the Bridegroom that was intensely erotic, signifying a mystic spiritual union (81-82). Silence was a prime virtue for this religious community. Referring to a poem describing the ideal initiate, Volting explains, “She speaks of the need to control her senses and strive for virtue. Finally, she focuses on the need for submissive control of her own voice” (83). Volting offers the following verses in Medieval German from the lore of the Unterlinden Sisters:

Ich muss min snelle zungen binden,
Das mir krume sie glich als schlecht,
Sol ich hie von got ich befinden,
Und sol mir ymmer werden recht. (83)

I must restrain my quick tongue,
So that I am ready to accept the crooked as well as the straight,
If I am ever to receive anything here from God,
And if I am ever to settle (trans. Volting)

Erika Lindgren notes that one renowned Unterlinden novice, Anna of Winegga, was said to have “kept a silence so intense that it seemed she had neither mouth to speak nor ears to hear,” such was her distance from the sinful world (94). Silence, then, may be taken as the Unterlinden hallmark of purity and seclusion in the sacred confines of the Colmar convent.⁸ But in the case of the surreptitious narrator René Unterlinden, we learn that silence may also conceal as well as purify.

René Unterlinden, nourished in the Gardens of Greenwich Village where he engages in a torrid affair with Vasilisa Golden that is anything but mystical, maintains long silence in regard to his fling with the Golden wife and his siring of the boy Vespasian until near the end, when he daringly declares the truth to Nero Golden with Vasilisa in attendance, thus shattering the old man’s illusion that he still has a blood descendant (356). The name Unterlinden is thus ironical, all the

more so in that the “silent” narrator is in fact telling us everything he knows all along and moreover making a movie about it. All three antecedents, of Berlin, of Vogelweide’s lyric, and of the convent, contribute to the dubious yet truthful character of the narrator, who both sins and redeems, conceals truth and reveals truth betimes. In the end, he is “ready to accept the crooked as well as the straight” (Volfing, 83) and to become right with Nero Golden, with us, and with his future film audience.

The 2016 Election

The election of Donald Trump, here styled “the Joker” (248) vs “the Batwoman” (262), metaphorically parallels the evolving Golden tragedy, both being instances of the dialectic of barbarism, one in the American body politic and the other in the Mumbaian annals of crime and cultural discord. In the Golden family model, the barbarian entities eventually destroy the clan along with a host of casualties along the way, and a “holy family” finally outlasts them (René Unterlinden, his true love Suchitra, and Vespa). The Trump family is obliquely mirrored in the family of Nero Golden, whose Golden House is a reference to the Trump empire in New York, with its gaudy tower, its pathetic offspring (servile epigones of a fraudulent and corrupt patriarch), and the Slavic trophy wife and her young son. The narrator, in Chapter 24 of the novel, digressively expounds upon the horror of the 2016 election as “the Joker” gradually gains popularity and it becomes likely that America has enough “deplorables” to actually give him an electoral victory:

He had seen off the Suicide Squad, his feeble competition, but he permitted a few of his inferiors to think of themselves as future members of a Joker administration. The Penguin, the Riddler, Two-Face and Poison Ivy lined up behind the Joker in packed arenas, swaying like doo-wop backing singers while their leader spoke of the unrivaled beauty of white skin and red lips to adoring audiences wearing green fright wigs and chanting in unison, *Ha! Ha! Ha!* (248)

As the election year progresses, the House of Golden descends into torpidity and gloom, Nero Golden himself sinking into senility and impotence; his “preferred prostitute Mlle. Loulou” (279) finally has to escort him back to his front porch, where she announces to Vasilisa: “Ma’am . . . your husband is not himself” (282). Meanwhile, the nation totters toward mental and moral collapse: “Outside the house it was the Joker’s world, the world of what reality had begun to mean in America, which was to say, a kind of radical untruth: phoniness, garishness, bigotry, vulgarity, violence, paranoia, and looking down upon it all from his dark tower, a creature with white skin and green hair and bright, bright red lips” (284). It is the rise of a confederacy of dunces, the absurd advent of a misrule of fools and miscreants, that corresponds to the hegemony of the far-flung criminal element, Z Company, a House of Mammon, of which Nero Golden became a part and which finally dooms him and his family.

Surprisingly but somehow aptly, Napoleon’s penis enters the picture.⁹ The strange odyssey of the great dictator’s shriveled organ becomes a temporary obsession of Nero Golden; perhaps an allusion to Trump’s tiny hands, which of course argue tiny penis. The phallic allusion leads to a triad of narcissistic tyrants: Nero Claudius, Napoleon, and Trump, all connected one way or another to Nero Golden. The pitifully shrunk member of Napoleon is emblematic of his historical failure as a fallen potentate who was finally mutilated and dismembered; compare Mussolini, Saddam Hussein, and the Romanian and Libyan dictators who were also disrespectfully put down and savaged postmortem. Nero Golden grows old and is

burned to death in Z Company's attack on his Golden House, along with his demonic wife and her fake mother. His own powers of impregnation proved inadequate to sire the fourth son, a lack that led indirectly to Vasilisa's conscription of the narrator to do the job. As we know, the election of 2016 resulted in the actual election of the putative "Joker," who has now been voted out of office yet whose chaotic rule still resonates in civic consciousness, especially since the events of January 6, 2021; the reign of Nero Golden does come to an absolute end in the novel, and perhaps this is the author's hopeful vision of the future, that America may soon be purged and renewed by a similar catharsis.

One Meaningful Deed

About midway in the novel, the narrator meditates upon his dream of making a great film which would be set in the Gardens where he grew up and where his story, as a character in the saga of Nero Golden, would be played out. He is inspired by Ingmar Bergman's famous classic *The Seventh Seal*, in which the Knight plays chess with Death in the attempt to delay the inevitable so that he may return home to see his wife before he dies, but also, which the narrator does not mention, to save the "holy family" that is under his protection. Unterlinden offers the following interpretation of the passage from Revelation which gives the Bergman film its title:

"And when the Lamb had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour" (Revelation 8:1). To me, the silence in heaven, the nonappearance of God, was the truth of the secular vision of the universe, and half an hour meant the length of a human life. The opening of the seventh seal revealed that God was nowhere with nothing to say and Man was given the space of his little life to perform, as the knight wished to perform, one meaningful deed. (160)

René Unterlinden thinks that his "one meaningful deed" will be the completion of his film about the Golden House and the Garden; but is artistic achievement really the apex of human potential? If humankind is distinguished by virtue of possessing an ethical consciousness, then it follows that the real measure of a life is its moral achievement, which may or may not be visible to others or even known beyond the person for whom it is the crown, the "one meaningful deed" that validates existence. René Unterlinden commits one truly meaningful misdeed by investing himself sexually in Vasilisa's scheme to produce a bastard son for Nero Golden, thereby solidifying her hold on him and his fortune. For this he can only atone by finally telling Golden the truth, which he does, and by assuming guardianship of his son in accordance with Golden's will at the end. Perhaps Golden himself deserves credit for the one meaningful deed of assigning the narrator guardian status of the child who is really René's own son. At any rate, it delivers the boy from inheriting the curse of the Golden line and its ill-fated house, thanks also to Vasilisa's heroic child-toss from the infernal tower, which to be fair is also a deed with a moral value. Thus René Unterlinden, maker of films and protector of his son, finds fulfillment both artistically and morally and is furthermore rewarded by forgiveness and reconciliation from his true love Suchitra, who thus performs her own "one meaningful deed."

Rushdie has used the idea of corruption ending in a cleansing apocalypse in earlier works. The novel *Shame* (1983) chronicles the history of the notorious ruling caste of Pakistan, aided and abetted by the comic villain and jester Omar Khayyam Shakil, who is born and raised in a fantastic mansion which represents the chaotic history of the region and which collapses in a great earthquake in the end, much like

the burning House of Golden. *Midnight's Children* (1981) ends in a similar scene, an apocalyptic riot reflecting the religious and political conflicts of modern India, yet with the hope of a better future through the elephant-eared child Aadam Sinai, born of Shiva and Parvati but nurtured by Saleem Sinai and inheritor of Saleem's magic. More recently, in *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* (2015), the narrative concludes with the victory of the earthlings, aided by the Queen of Qaf, over the terroristic Dark Jinn who had all but destroyed human civilization, followed by a redemptive vision of the future 1000 years hence, when human beings have finally become wholly rational, non-violent, and tolerant (at the expense, however, of their creative and imaginative faculties). *The Golden House* offers a much humbler recovery from a less extensive disaster than these precedents, but it does adhere to the same pattern of catastrophe followed by hope and consolation. In René Unterlinden's reading of Revelation, the criterion of the "one meaningful deed," we are given a goal to which everyone may aspire; and if we accept the moral imperative as the measure of the "meaningful deed," then it seems that everyone does have a chance, even in the absence of the great I AM, to live and die authentically, in whatever space and time, whatever half an hour, is given. Great or small, deliberate or spontaneous, the good deed is the one that matters. Even the littlest life, rounded with a sleep, is opportunity enough.

Notes

¹ The story of the Iranian fatwa initiated against Salman Rushdie is told by the author in his book *Joseph Anton: A Memoir* (2012), that being the name given him for protection while he lived in London.

² Rushdie's treatment of the subject of gender identity in this character is controversial. It includes an imagined session in which D contends with his therapist, rejecting the psychology of identity and its terminology (253-259). Queried by critic Kate Tuttle as to his "treatment of gender or other identity issues, he laughed, a little bitterly. 'I've offended people before.'"

³ Vasilisa, sent into the forest by her wicked stepmother to find Baba Yaga and to procure firelight, has to pass tests imposed by the witch; when she escapes she has to carry a flaming skull on a pole to light her way. The classic tale, related in *The Poetic Outlook on Nature of the Slavs* (1865-1869) by Alexander Afanasyev and translated in *Traditional Russian Tales* (1916) by Leonard Magnus, also famously illustrated in color prints by Ivan Bilibin (1899), is a moral trope on the ideals and roles of motherhood, as evidenced in Vasilisa's skills tested by the witch.

⁴ See "Unter den Linden" at *Britannica* or *VisitBerlin* for the history of the famous boulevard and the numerous civic and cultural sites that line its route.

⁵ This poem was originally a song; the original melody has been lost, but the poem was set to music and became popular in the 19th century. See Paddock for an analysis of the linden tree as a symbol of sexual love (15).

⁶ The official museum site, musee-unterlinden.com contains information about the Museum Unterlinden in Colmar, France, which preserves many artifacts from the 13th century cloister and the holy order of Unterlinden nuns.

⁷ The very contemporary date of this publication in 2017 suggests to me the probability that Rushdie was aware of it as he wrote *The Golden House*, given his close association with the publishing industry and his nose for all things arcane and esoteric.

⁸ Quoth Lindgren: "The Unterlinden Sister-Book's author devotes an entire chapter in the introduction to the "strict observance of silence." The value of silence was illustrated in the metaphor of the oven: "For just as the heat of an oven is warmed

with its opening obstructed, so with the observation of silence is the grace of the Holy Spirit retained in the heart" (93).

⁹ Rushdie's flair for the enigmatic here reaches the extreme—the bizarre. But truth may be stranger than fiction. Napoleon's organ was allegedly removed, along with the heart and stomach, upon his death by his physician, who conveyed it to a Corsican priest. It has been sold and resold in a remarkable chain of provenance culminating in purchase by an American urologist named John J. Lattimer, who passed it on to his daughter. It has been described as "a maltreated strip of buckskin shoelace" and "a shriveled eel" (Tharoor).

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The Lines We Can and Cannot Cross: Une lettre à Marc Capelle

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Preface:

*Adoption, especially international adoption, blurs lines—bloodlines, notably, but also those of geography, ethnicity, and culture. As the parent of three now-grown children adopted from India, I have often reckoned with these lines and more. This came to a head in 2020, when COVID, along with the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor, moved society's lines in deeply significant ways. At least we thought they did. I have come to believe that the spring and summer of 2020 exposed fault lines that were already there, gaps that will not be breached anytime soon. It was around this time that I read Marc Capelle's *Quand tu iras à Saigon*, a first-hand account of international adoption, and decided to write this letter I may never send. The format does not lend itself to formal in-text citation, but since it is a letter by a scholar, my translations of the French and a list of references can be found at the end.*

Cher Monsieur Capelle,

Can I call you Marc? I expect not. You are a complete stranger and you are French. The fact that we both have internationally adopted children is likely not enough for us to bond. It will probably be even less so when I am done. If French textbooks are to be believed, the French appreciate complex conversation, even heated *discussion*. At the same time, however, it appears they possess a great deal of pride, particularly French men, whose ego, it is said, bruises easily.

I am writing about your book, *Quand tu iras à Saigon*, which I discovered on a search for autobiographical adoption stories from outside the United States. When I first read about this book that journalists kept referring to either as a love letter, a story in two voices, or both, I couldn't wait. I wanted to hear your daughter Sarah's voice in dialogue with yours. My own daughter, whom I adopted from India at age 6, and I once co-authored an article. I was sure I'd found a French story that would harmonize with our own.

Instead, I found myself wanting to write a scholarly rebuke. The two voices in the book, it turns out, are both yours: a first-person account of your journey to parenthood and an imagined third-person narrative whose perspective is supposedly Sarah's in some future time. Perhaps you wrote in the spirit of paternal love, but I have to ask: did you really think you could appropriate her mind? The mind of a child born in Vietnam, a former French colony, which you view repeatedly through the myopic lens of a *colon*? One could argue, of course, that your fetish book, *Un barrage contre le Pacifique* by Marguerite Duras, criticizes the colonial system, and that by extension, you do too. Yet you wax poetic about the languid dream state the

book evokes for you, without once mentioning the disease-ridden native children whose mortality rate leaves the villagers living mere inches from their buried bones.

Furthermore, you first visited Vietnam as part of your work promoting French culture through education. On the one hand, one could say this is in the spirit of international exchange. On the other, it could just as easily be part of France's ongoing, sometimes questionable, *mission civilisatrice*. Given your dismissive attitude toward the Indigenous peoples of Australia, where you sat to write this book, one rather suspects the latter. (Lest you think I'm making too much of this, let me remind you that I'm American. Wiping out Indigenous peoples to build a multicultural society that excludes them is a national tragedy, cloaked in heroic myth, that I recognize all too well).

I imagine you get the drift. As a scholar, I could have written a withering critique of the colonialist impulse in your book. I just couldn't do it in a purely academic way. Every time I started, the human in my role as a professor of the humanities would get the upper hand. I don't mean that in some vague, general sense. I mean it got personal.

To begin with, it brought up an embarrassing memory. One of my three children was about Sarah's age when I contributed to an article that talked about our happily-ever-after adoption fairy tale. Like most such tales, it was built on something between self-deception and lies. My children were still young and hadn't been here very long. I had no business drawing conclusions at that stage. Moreover, though I could not yet admit it, the first signs had already appeared that they had been deeply traumatized. I had no idea what I was talking about, and frankly, neither do you. You say that in the teen years, some adopted children may go through a phase you term *un peu compliqué*. *Tu parles!* A little complicated? Try years of therapy, only some of it effective. Try changing schools not once, not twice, but six different times, never quite finding one that fits. Try relentless alienation, not just yours, but also your child's. It feels terrible to want to give your children the world, only to have them turn it, turn you away, and you don't even understand why. We adoptive parents don't get the extent of the wound, the depth of the hole left when we uproot children from their culture, from all they know and love. To be fair, this is not a universal experience. It may not even be one that my three children fully share (you would have to ask them to know for sure). Maybe I am merely jealous that everyone in your family seems okay. Then again, maybe "seems" is the operative word. Maybe you are hiding from the reader, from yourself, from the truth. Maybe it's a case of simple yet dangerous naïveté.

Please don't misunderstand me. I see how deeply you want to connect with Sarah. Unlike all too many white, well-off, Western adoptive parents, you and your wife go to great lengths to establish links between yourselves, your daughter, and the land where she was born. Before I met my children, I'd never been to India. Instead, I read a lot and learned some Hindi, then later—less successfully—attempted Tamil, a language whose very name I struggle to pronounce. I didn't have the kind of deep, longstanding connection that you claim to have with Vietnam.

This begs another question. How could you claim to love a place, work there even, and not try to learn something of its native tongue? Granted, I'm a linguaphile. Learning languages is what I do. Maybe that is why I want to shake you, beg you to do better—better than I did—while your daughter is still small. I, regretfully, let Hindi slip away, while Tamil never really even got in the door. What if you imagined a future for Sarah in which she speaks the language of her birth?

I find this particularly difficult to grasp because, like me, you read extensively, processing the world through words. You mention not just Duras, but a number of Vietnamese authors as well (read in translation, presumably). Yet not only do you

not speak the language, but also, despite the other books you mention, you come back time and again to *Un barrage contre le Pacifique*, moribund Vietnamese children, colonists, and all. One character, le père Bart, is known as a good man because he adopts a local child, even though the child is essentially a servant; the adoption mostly serves to divert public attention from père Bart's black-market business trafficking Pernod. Then there is Paul and Suzanne's unnamed mother, only ever mentioned as *la mère*, a poor, white, French colonist who takes in local children, then helplessly watches them die. You claim to identify with Paul and Suzanne, yet when you visit Vietnam, you complain about the very heat you claim these characters had made you crave. You use words like *échapper* and *affronter* to describe your experience there, then later, you suggest a dark and difficult future awaits young Vietnamese who don't choose exile. What does this say to your daughter? With whom will she identify?

"Representation matters," we say in the United States these days. My children are older now, and while I can't speak for them, I watch them and I see that it is true. Our family doesn't love everything about Vice President Harris, for example, but we love that someone who looks like my children holds power and is in the public eye. Conversely, we cringe when we see Indians depicted as seedy gas station clerks in North America or destitute, cow-worshipping beggars in South Asia. One could argue, I suppose, that stereotypes contain an element of truth, but it is not the whole truth, and it is not a white adoptive parent's truth to tell.

Speaking of the whole truth, let's talk about the four-volume series *Couleur de peau: miel* by the graphic novelist and Korean adoptee, Jung, published in Belgium between 2007 and 2016. Like you, I was deeply moved by his work, including its adaptation into a feature film. I admit, though, that I got a little lost when, oh-so-poetically, you say, *[il] a transcendé les questions qui le taraudaient*. This is the story of a young man in pain, torn from his culture, whose place in his adoptive family seems precarious at best. Each time Jung returned to Korea, he found cultural connection, but also memories of a painful past. He talks about adoptee mental health and his sister's untimely death, while his absent birth mother haunts page after page. As the fourth volume comes to an end, it seems as though this latter wound, at least, might be healed. Instead, the series stops, with no fifth volume in sight. We have no idea how the story ends. Is Jung healing through his art, as you suggest? Perhaps. Clearly, he is processing his past, trying to reconcile his past and present self. Suggesting some sort of transcendent closure, however, brings to mind the aforementioned naïveté.

Perhaps you didn't pay that part much mind because you assert and truly believe that Sarah's birth family can never be found. It is tempting to imagine—as you in fact do—that Sarah will simply accept that and move on. To be fair, she may. Then again, she may have memories that haunt her days and dreams. She may also be one of those for whom the lack of information further fuels the desire to know. The fewer the answers, the bigger the questions can become.

Please know this doesn't mean Sarah does not and will not always love you. Just realize that as she grows, her feelings may grow to be more than, what was it? *Ah, oui, un peu compliqué*. Since we're both readers who love to recommend books, let me suggest three, all written by adoptees: *Je cherche encore ton nom*, by Patricia Loison, an adult adoptee from India; *Le Chant du bouc* by Carmen Maria Vega, who is Guatemalan born; and *L'adoption internationale: mythes et réalités* by South Korean adoptee and activist Joohee Bourgain. Together with Jung's work, these books paint a fuller, more complex picture of international adoption than anything you or I could ever hope to create. Yes, they raise hard questions that it would be

easier to ignore. Experience has taught me, though, that this is something we must not do.

I also recommend *Métisse blanche* and *Retour à la saison des pluies* by Kim Lefèvre, who was born of an illicit relationship between her Vietnamese mother and a French soldier. Lefèvre, who has spent most of her adult life in France, has had experiences that may resonate for Sarah in significant ways. She knows first-hand what it means to live in the *entre-deux*, to have one foot in France, the other in Vietnam. She also knows what it is like to move in a world where your insides and outsides don't necessarily match as others think they should.

I know, I know. You live in France, the country that actively refuses multiculturalism in favor of *intégration*, the country that recently accused its university professors of promoting so-called American post-colonial theory (never mind Édouard Glissant or Frantz Fanon). Your ambassador even gave TV host Trevor Noah a dressing down for saying the French World Cup championship was a victory for Africa. Granted, you don't seem to buy into this. You write that nowadays, *on revendique, on affiche les différences*, telling Sarah *ta différence fait ta force* and *tu vis dans un monde en couleurs*. The reality for French people of color, unfortunately, is rather different. You couldn't know yet, of course, that in May and June 2020, thousands would take to the streets in the midst of a pandemic to protest police violence and support Black Lives Matter, that a few months prior to that, French Asians would flood social media with *#JeNeSuisPasUnVirus*. Those aren't isolated incidents. They are eruptions of racial tension that has been simmering all along.

That said, I get not getting it. I've been writing my way through these questions myself, grappling with what I know and what I still have to learn. Spring 2020 saw the publication of two essays I'd written about adoptive parenting, both of which address the question of my children's race and my white privilege. As spring rolled into summer, however, it became clear that I really did not know much of anything at all. Like you, I thought—still think—my children are beautiful, in part because they don't look like everyone else in my tiny mountain town. Yet telling them that their difference makes them beautiful or that I embrace diversity is no longer enough. I now realize it never was.

Let me close with my final question. Who did you write this *récit* for? The reviews say that it's a love letter to your daughter, and in many ways, it is. When you talk about yourself, your journey to parenthood, your hopes and fears, the compulsion to write, I hear you loud and clear. The ever-expanding number of adoption stories on the market tells me we are not alone. Besides, even if we removed adoption from the equation, don't we all have a story to tell?

Furthermore, we are both bibliophiles. Of course we want to write a book. I just don't know if this was the one to write. I say that not as an American or as a scholar, but as a parent, one who also planned to write a book. It wasn't going to be another adoption fairy tale—that blew up in my face—but rather a true story about childhood trauma and the havoc it wreaked on my family's world. As my children grew, though, I reconsidered—many of the things I would have liked to say were not actually mine to tell. Similarly, it sometimes feels like you co-opt, even supplant, a lot of Sarah's story en route to sharing your own. Trust me—I know that line is hard to find, especially when so often, your love for your daughter shines brightly from the page.

Still. I wonder what it would look like if, instead of being blinded by it, we let that light illuminate a new path, one on which our children are free to be both the people they are now and the ones they choose to become.

Bien à vous
L. Dennis

Notes

Paragraph 1: Journalists Carole Gamelin and Françoise Objois refer to *Quand tu iras à Saigon* as a “*récit d’amour*” (“love story”) or a “*lettre d’amour*” (“love letter”), respectively, while several reviewers, including those in *Le Figaro*’s summer reading column, refer to it being “*à deux voix*” (“in two voices”), a quote that is also used on the book’s back cover.

Par. 3: This reference comes from the following passage: “Il en mourait tellement qu’on ne les pleurait plus et que depuis longtemps déjà on ne leur faisait pas de sépulture. Simplement, en rentrant du travail, le père creusait un petit trou devant la case et il y couchait son enfant mort” (“So many died that no one cried over them anymore, and there’d been no burials for a long time. Whenever a father came home from work, he would simply dig a little hole in front of the hut and lay his dead child in it”; Duras 118).

Par. 4: Capelle’s first trip to Vietnam was part of a mission described as follows: “Les Vietnamiens veulent que l’on forme leurs élites. En échange, la France diffusera ses programmes télévisés, ses films, ses livres—ceux qui sont autorisés, bien sûr—toute sa quincaillerie culturelle. [. . .] On vous a demandé de venir pour servir les intérêts de la France, j’espère que c’est clair!” (“The Vietnamese want us to educate their elite. In return, France will share its television programs, films, books—those that are allowed, of course—all its cultural devices. [. . .] We have asked you to come here to serve France’s interests. I hope that’s clear!”; Capelle 27-28).

Par. 6 [U]n peu compliqué (“a little complicated”; Capelle 78). “*Tu parles!*” (“You’ve got to be kidding me!”) is my reaction to this immense understatement, which I chose to leave in French.

Par. 8 Duras writes of le père Bart, “On le disait bon parce qu’il avait adopté un enfant” (“People said he was a good man because he had adopted a child”; 41), even as she complicates that observation with the other details mentioned. As for the mother’s unsuccessful efforts to save some of the children, see the passages surrounding the earlier observation about the child mortality rate (115-21).

Par. 8 “échapper” means “to escape,” as in “j’échappais momentanément à la chaleur moite” (“I momentarily escaped the stifling heat”; Capelle 23), while “affronter” means “to confront,” as in “je me sentais prêt à affronter mes partenaires vietnamiens” (“I felt ready to confront my Vietnamese collaborators”; 29). The juxtaposition of “confront” and “collaborator” is telling, particularly in light of the observations about the future of Vietnam in which Capelle presents exile or tenacious struggle as the only available options (103).

Par. 10 “[I]l a transcendé les questions qui le taraudaient” (“[He] overcame the questions that plagued him”; Capelle 79). Certain themes, such as the difficulties Jung experienced as a child or the absence of his birth mother, recur throughout all four volumes of *Couleur de peau: miel*. The third and fourth volumes cover his return trips to Korea and delve more deeply into adoptee mental health, including his suspicion that his sister took her life (Jung, vol. 3, pp. 131-133; vol. 4, p. 46). The fourth volume ends with the prospect of a DNA test and possible connection to

his birth family (121-128); in the end, the question is deliberately left unanswered (140-141).

Par. 12 “[U]n peu compliqué” (“[A] little complicated”) is a direct echo of an earlier reference.

Par. 13 “L’entre-deux” is literally “the in-between”; I chose this phrase because the French has a depth and resonance the English lacks.

Par. 14 “[O]n revendique, on affiche les différences [. . .] ta différence fait ta force [. . .] tu vis dans un monde en couleurs” (“People take pride in their differences and show them off [. . .] your difference is your strength [. . .] you live in a multicolored world”; Capelle 80). Race became a highly visible issue in France in 2020, just as it did in the United States. It led to thousands joining French Black Lives Matter marches (Sorman), while Asians in both countries were attacked over the false assumption that they must be spreading COVID (Fouché). One wonders if Capelle has considered the impact such incidents might have on his Asian-born daughter, and if she has already experienced race-based hate first-hand. My guess would be that she has.

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Binoculars

By Donald Boes

Bluegrass Community and Technical College

This pair of tiny telescopes can follow
a forward pass or a tiny ship on big water
but I focus on a blue jay, an echo of a dinosaur,
my father's few remaining implements,
why Bob Dylan matters, discounts
to grand openings and vacation spots,
the shrinking and the dwindling.
Now I understand why the back
of my hand itches. Why
I will never discard that stack
of books. Why scientists hail
the intelligence of the octopus.
I plan to find a place at the shaky table.
All I know is around the corner.
Now, this heaviness around my neck.

Toothpaste

By Donald Boes

Bluegrass Community and Technical College

I order a complicated beverage
so I can admire my name on a cup
and for a few sips I block out
the rapey drones and the robot dogs
who learn to open the lab door
for each other, thank you very much.
To stay on the road, bands
employ outsiders to replace original members
who are dead or can't dredge up the solos.
That toothpaste will never go back
into the tube. That origami swan
my student fashioned in class. Like her,
I look out the window. Like her,
I tire of prerequisites. That bird
could fly and was the color of her eyes.

Sadness

By Donald Boes

Bluegrass Community and Technical College

The contractor, although dedicated,
must return to close the gap
between the roof and the gutter.
After so long, a railing is added
to the bed. And then the bed,
with lots of muscle and belief,
is dragged down the stairs. Reading
is no longer required but sadness
never goes out of print. The rain.
The pillboxes. When the troubled plane
touched the tarmac, we applauded
because we loved the feckless feeling
of being alive. We quit the airport
to pry grubby bricks out of April mud.
There is no present like the moment.

Asfixia

By Carlos Orihuela

University of Alabama at Birmingham

I

Recuerda, el 2020 es tu habitación,
el techo estático, arrancado de tu vida;
su vacío desteje el sol, los ángulos cortantes del aire,
las cifras dañadas del calendario.
Tu cuerpo habita el reloj, las fases estrujadas del mundo,
mide su respiración, los gramos de su energía.
¡Ah, tiempo encadenado, vuelo atrapado en la conciencia!
¿Quién apura este desliz del átomo, las operaciones fallidas
del organismo, los aceros desflecados en la respiración?
¿Quién arranca unidades del aire, rocas angulares del dolor,
tallos aún vivientes?
¿Quién desata el aguacero equívoco, los calores rabiosos,
los ventarrones desplumados?
Clausuraron el amanecer,
los templos vigorosos del espacio:
desde las ventanas los pájaros estiran la luz,
cincelan el rumor con tercios gorjeos y silencios;
el horizonte declina, salpica astros huidizos,
dardos calcinados que desangran las tardes.
¿Sientes tu extensión, tu ruta temporal, tus topes corporales?
¿Te sabes exacto, aún creciente, agregado al espacio?
El zigzag del sable cuarteas las horas, las rutas al vacío;
lumbres agónicas tiritan en el corazón,
retuercen las amenazas, los capítulos vacíos de la soledad;
el viento enreda aullidos, aleteos remotos del espacio,
estruendos sospechosos en el pecho;
máquinas apuradas quiebran esquinas, avenidas, edificios apagados,
cruzan el portón del destino.
Todo conduce a la misma celda, a la fecha atropellada,
al péndulo ciego;
se marchitan mapas, voces, memorias;
en los muros reptan auroras, paisajes extraviados,
días empapelados.
¿Quién devora las gotas del instinto, el día repetido,
las treguas razonadas?
Aquí, en la cúpula opaca, en el mirador extenuado del cuerpo,

se divaga, fracasa el pulso numérico;
arde el ser racional en tableros, en escenas recortadas, en registros erróneos;
cojean los cálculos, las miradas lineales, los tramos pendientes;
se ha quebrado la rueda previsible: el carril de la voluntad,
los trazos mensurables, las prédicas veraces;
menguan las plazas solares, los prados oceánicos:
brisas atascadas, esplendores estrujados.
Desde esta hondonada, en las junturas falsas de la tierra,
arrinconados, vagamos por los lados perdidos,
los bosques del pánico:
el destino es el aletazo ciego, la brújula hundida en las tinieblas.
Y despiertos, aún en escombros, hechos de reflejos,
de humos de hambre, contenemos el vuelo, el salto fresco;
atamos ideas, las columnas del corazón,
los filamentos del ansia.
Queda conservar las manos, las cuerdas de la imaginación,
las cartas escondidas,
los fardos enterrados de la esperanza.

Asphyxia (Translation of *Asfixia*)

**By Lynda Jentsch
Samford University**

I

Remember, 2020 is your room,
the static ceiling, torn from your life;
its void unravels the sun, the air's cutting angles,
the damaged numbers on the calendar.
Your body inhabits the clock, the crushed phases of the world,
measures its breath, its grams of energy.
Ah, chained time, flight trapped in awareness!
Who hurries this atom's false step, the organism's
failed exertions, frayed steel in the breath?
Who tears out pieces of air, pain's angular rocks,
stalks that still show signs of life?
Who unleashes the misguided downpour, the rabid heat,
the despoiled gales?
They walled up the dawn,
space's vigorous temples:
From the windows birds stretch light,
carve their murmurs with stubborn gurgles and silences;
the horizon goes down, spatters fugitive stars,
scorched darts that leech-bleed afternoons.
Do you feel your length, your temporal course, your body's limits?
Do you know the exact you, still growing, added to space?
The zigzag of the saber slashes the hours, the ways to the void;
writhing embers shiver in the heart,
wring out threats, solitude's empty chapters;
the wind tangles howls, remote flutters in space,
suspicious clamors in the chest;
hurried machines crush street corners, avenues, snuffed out buildings,
step through destiny's sliding glass.
Everything leads to the same cell, to the trampled date,
to the blind pendulum;
maps, voices, memories wither;
auroras, landscapes gone astray, papered-over days
slither on the walls.
Who devours instinct's droplets, the repeated day,
the reasoned truces?

Here, in the opaque dome, in the body's languishing watchtower,
the pulse's numbers ramble, fracture;
the rational self burns in partitions, in cut scenes, in falsified records;
Calculations, linear glances, pending intervals limp along;
The predictable wheel has broken: the will's ruts,
the metered designs, the true tirades;
sunny plazas, ocean meadows wane:
stopped up breezes, wrung out splendors.
At the bottom of this ravine, in the false seams of the earth,
cornered, we wander along the lost edges,
panic's forests:
Destiny is the blind beating of wings, the compass sunk in the dark.
And awake, still in rubble, made of glaring light,
and hungry smoke, we hold back our flight, the untried leap;
We tie up ideas, the heart's columns,
anxiety's filaments.
What's left: to preserve hands, the imagination's cords,
hidden missives,
the buried bundles of hope.

Saturday Night at the Symphony

By Marianne Peel
Independent Scholar

She used to sit on the fire escape
Saturday nights, waiting for the symphony
to begin. Couldn't afford a real ticket.

Not even to the Sunday matinee. Cheap
seats. Standing room only. In the nosebleed section.
She didn't mind the rust on the fire escape, the way

it left a waffle pattern on her backside, on the soft underneath
of her thighs. I marked my calendar. Deliberately
walked her alley every Saturday night.

Watched her close her eyes as the Overture
began. The way she leaned her head
on the railing. Wish I had brought her a pillow

or a cup of hot cocoa or a plaid shawl
to wrap around her shoulders. I watched
her conduct. First with one hand, then with both.

She would cue in the trombones. Extend her right hand
to the tipping point of the slide. When the cello section
played, she would put both hands to her throat, as if

she just couldn't breathe. Allowing her air to exhale
only when the strings finished on a Picardy third.
I watched her sway forward and back as the bassoon played.

Executed a slow chromatic scale. Eighth note by eighth note
until he landed at the valley of his range. When the piccolo
played, I watched her stand and jump from step to step

matching her feet to the first of a quartet of sixteenth notes.
She arabesqued her way up the fire escape, taking flight
among stars pulsing to the rhythm of her improvised dance.

Hearing the Call to Prayer at an Ancient Hittite Village in Turkey

By Marianne Peel
Independent Scholar

Today, standing on a mountaintop
surrounded by the ruins of a three-thousand-year-old
Hittite ancient city, I could not leave the site.
This was sacred ground and I wanted to feel the rootedness
to this space. And so I placed my feet shoulder-width
and opened my palms to the wind.

And it was at that moment
the call to prayer spoke from the minaret.
A prayer I have heard five times each day, every day,
since landing in Istanbul.
I'd hear the ragged break in the silence
and then go about the prayerless business of my world.

But today I needed to be still,
wanted to be still. To call my body
and my mind to a place of conscious quiet.
Arabic crackled through the air and I closed my eyes,
memorizing words in a melody immersed in quarter tones
unfamiliar to my western ears.

And all was still, save for the wind.
When I opened my eyes
there were blue iridescent clusters of light.
Silver threads wove the blue patches
into a tapestry, a sparkling quilt
I could touch with my hands.
And I cradled up this blanket of blue and silver
in my open palms, held this light in my arms,
and carried this quiet
down the mountain . . .

My Father Visits Her Grave Every Sunday

By Marianne Peel
Independent Scholar

My father holds the urn, two-handed,
and tells me of the cold
on my mother's lips
the last time he kissed her.

Like frost emanating from slabs of meat
hanging in a warehouse.
Spinning carcasses
with sinew and muscle exposed.

There is wind between them, he tells me.
She always smelled of Camels and Dentyne gum,
Jack Daniels, and midnight bologna sandwiches.
Her mouth a chronicle of food and vice.

Last week
we selected the container for my father's cremation.
A thin corrugated cardboard,
like a box to store winter sweaters under a bed.

My father shows me his name on the gravestone,
a 1934 birthdate
and a void after the dash.
Limestone waiting for his death year.

And I wonder who chisels these dates,
these berserk tattoos on rock.
There is a graveyard artist
smoking a cheap cigar

with a flask in the pocket
of his red plaid flannel shirt.
He scratches out a shallow groove
using a light hand

buffs and polishes
with beeswax and a rag,
a cloth doubling as his handkerchief,
monogrammed in curlicue script.

His palms, creased with shovel dirt,
sprinkle holy water from the sanctuary.
He blows breath into the cove of his hands,
producing a smoky incense, limestone dust from his lungs.
He is a proficient altar boy,
genuflects, eyes lowered,
and offers a toast
with the bourbon from his flask.

Aged in new white oak barrels,
he drizzles the headstone with Kentucky liquor
wood sugars caramelized and charred,
the gravestone properly christened.

Poem Speaks from the Clutches of a Pandemic

By Rhonda Pettit

University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College

My chest feels too heavy,
breath must come from a machine.

I am too still.

I thought words were my organs and muscles,
white space my bones, the page

or the screen just the place
where my life becomes

visible. Now

the cursor blinks while I
burn with limitation. Here
in this crowded room,
among those above and beneath
blankets of loss,
I scan the masks, the shields,
the walls.

 Their blankness
is the terror.

They need what I offer, what I am
inside of them—not a virus
that kills by living,

but the life that came before
and will come after.

Running Head

By Rhonda Pettit

University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College

I've been programmed,
formatted, called for. All
my makers are behind me.

I sit at the top or bottom
of every page
like God.

*

I am a one-line poem
made of words and numbers.

I repeat with variation, add up,
echo, look nice,
seem fey.

*

My curious logic is:
know your location and follow
the sequence,

ruled by ones and zeros.
My stance across each page is
concise

or limited
(take your pick).

*

I hear a few rapid-fire clicks
and pop up like a paper-doll soldier.

I am jealous of keystrokes.

Is it you, Sticky Fingers,
setting me up with another blind date?

*

If I had legs I would launch
off the page, away

from order and appearances,
from auto-correct, spell-check, and clouds

that never rain down or gather up chords
of being.

*

Sometimes I am boldfaced
and underscored.

Sometimes I live in the grayscales,
evoke mystery and the fugitive
smoke before fire.

Either way,
I take you to the ends
of language.

*

Mirth comes to mind
but I don't know whose or how.

Someone a page over
is singing in the shower
of clichés.

I stick out my tongue
and wag.

(with thanks to Sarah Pearson (running head), and Josh Wilder (grayscales), Poetry
Workshop students in spring 2020)

Rainsay

By Rhonda Pettit

University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College

They fall like rain, the ancestors, from
wherever they have been
and never are

we miss them
when we don't listen carefully

to everything they might have said
done, not done
we must imagine
and answer

with our lives

the briefest interval
the benign choice daily
blessing or curse

a music we hold in our hands
our hands that look empty
merely holding time

palms up
thumbs and fingers splayed
our hands wet but the rain

slipping through

They opened their hands
They registered the gentle pelts
whispering futures

as always

those troubadours
troubling us

with their loves and limitations

Eureka!

By Gary Walton

Northern Kentucky University

On the windy scud between
The cannon gray of autumn rain
And the robin egg spring blue

Of fair sky, I spied a rainbow
Inching and arching its way over
All in careless serendipity as if

It were a ribbon to tie them together
In some symbiotic pull of yin and yang;
Before I could grab my camera to

Fix the image and make it a memento
To share and recall in darker times
It was gone, as a snowflake melts on

A hot tongue or a chocolate bar
Discorporates on a radiator in winter,
As if it all had been an illusion with

No existential proof but faulty memory
To memorialize its precocious appearance
And consequent delight and awe—

Soon after, a small plane appeared, flitting
Impetuously like a faulty kettle lid, tossing
About helpless in the windshear forces

Willy-nilly, a fragile toy on a naughty
Child's string, winging out of the
Tumble of black thunderheads,

Calamitous cumulonimbus,
Into the bright azure of calm,
But coming too fast and curving askew

As an alien spacecraft might try
To slide into the atmosphere, darting
To and fro defying not only expectation

But sure and stolid gravity itself—
Indeed as it spiraled nearer it actually
Tore itself apart, appearing to explode
Into three separate avatars and, then, I

Recognized they were white birds caught
In the terror of the storm who, when finally
Released, sailed into the safety of the sidle

Of a gentle slipstream—
One is tempted, of course, to tag such a
Sight as some kind of received symbol—

But of what? How easy it is for the eyes to
Be deceived? The fallibility of perception?
The human insistence to find meaning in

The random acts of nature, of happenstance?
Perhaps in this age bathed as it is in
Received imagery, it is enough just to be

Part of an aesthetic moment
What the Romantics called the Sublime
And to be lifted up, like the birds on

A friendly updraft, to something higher
Beyond mere logic and understanding
If just this once and for a moment.

Peripatetic Plague Panegyric

By Gary Walton

Northern Kentucky University

The day drips down like a
Hand-painted black and white photo,
A home-crafted print with the edges

Crinkled and pale yellow fixer stains
Blotched at the corners, the kind
I would make in our basement darkroom

When I was ten or eleven and Dad
Was at work selling cameras or off
Taking sample wedding pictures to

Show to a customer in need of a new lens;
It feels good to be out of confinement,
From sequestration, from viral isolation

To take a walk around the neighborhood—
It is late autumn; the trees are bare sticks
Stuck in the ground, black and dank, limbs

Naked against the sky, itself barren, gray
And oppressive like those found in
Gothic horror tales; abandoned nests of

Birds appear in the crux of branches as
If embarrassed like a naked ingénue stepping
Out of a private bath finding the door wide

Open blown by a gust of wind, the lock
Busted by neglect; some seem like squiggles
Of charcoal scratched hurriedly in a sketchbook,

Ebony charred smears as if they too are shocked
To be gazed upon by indifferent strangers;
The ground along the gravel path is littered

With last summers' harvest of oak, beech and maple,
Leaves piled up in plinths of crimson, gold,
Sienna, coffee, and simple brown; the squirrels

Are beside themselves with their bounty
Scampering among the flipped acorns and walnuts
Scattered like coins about their feet;

The street beside the armory is strewn with long
Tawny pine cones, as if gifts from an errant dog
Out at last for his evening perambulation, which

Join the dead needles to clog the storm drains;
Up ahead, along a crumbling slave wall, two
Young girls huddle conspiratorially among

The tangled weeds, giggling with teenage abandon,
Each staring into a single phone as their breath rises
Hot and steady above their heads forming a kind

Of secular halo that dissipates into the brisk air;
Then, standing on the promontory, high above the icy
River, I think the evening deserves the smell of nutmeg

Or a distant fire; instead I am assailed by the acrid tinge
Of charred brakes or clutches from dozens of heavy-duty
Trucks rumbling along the freeway a mile or so away—

But no, perhaps it is the lingering scent of a frightened
Skunk timidly making his way back into the woods;
I am not surprised I cannot tell the difference;

Isolation has made me a stranger in the world
That continues to tumble and sway according
To its own design despite my continued confusion,

And then, of course, there is the plague:
Invisible, determined, indefatigable;
The thought itself is like a goad that stops
My steps and sends me home again, alone . . .

Pandemic Pies

By Gary Walton

Northern Kentucky University

Masked and in a panic, I bought
Two pies when I broke quarantine
To pick up supplies—and now, they sit

In my kitchen like an accusation;
They are antithetical to my diet, filled as
They are with high fructose corn syrup,

Hydrolyzed palm kernel oil, yellow and
Red dyes numbers 1, 2, 3, ad infinitum
These temptations pale in comparison

To my Grandmother's cream pies, made
With sweet evaporated milk or her lemon
Meringue, whose topping was four times

As deep as the filling, about the ratio Dante
Claimed for heaven above purgatory (or
Perhaps it was St. Augustine or maybe

Mary Baker Eddy). The crusts
Were so flakey they would melt on your
Tongue like a communion wafer. My mother

Could never compete, to her own chagrin and
To my grandmother's delight I am sure—but
Mom made battalions of cookies and chocolate

Peanut butter buckeyes that she'd freeze
And parcel out from Thanksgiving to New Year's—
These masterstrokes are even pale avatars

Of the strudels and German cheese cakes my father
And I would wolf down on Sunday morning, with
Coffee and Chocolate milk, while my mother

And sister were dutifully at church. (I learned
Early there were many roads to Nirvana,
Especially if “the Way” included a cream-filled éclair.)

Namaste.

But, I am weak, alas, and have been isolated
In my tiny domicile for over nine months,
A gestation so humble I can’t help but feel

I deserve to be delivered, please any moment now;
We survived the Fourth of July, Labor Day,
Even the election! (“Thank the sweet honey-dipped Christ!”

As my dipso, rum-eyed neighbor used to say . . .) But now, the
Winter is upon us, so I don’t know if these pastries
Are some sort of symbol or for succor or just a

Cry for help. I heard that a vaccine is coming by
Easter, maybe even by Christmas to a few of the
Frontline faithful—a kind of deliverance, like

The Rapture or at least a store-bought indulgence.
Perhaps ultimate salvation will come like a hospital
Ship spotted on the distant horizon, or a Coast Guard

Cutter come to pull me out of the sea with a grappling
Hook and into a lifeboat—if I can just hang on . . .
If these pies will keep me afloat like a Mae West

Jacket long enough for a compassionate, condescending
Hand to free me like a saint’s dispensation or
Like a glazed donut in a baker’s window.

Spin that Wheel

By Christy Sulfridge
Union College

SCENE 1

(A retirement home. ERMA hefts a box half as big as her 4' 11" frame. Only the top of her slightly frizzy, permed hair can be seen over the box, as she struggles to open the entrance door to the retirement home. CHESTER opens the door for Erma, who graces him with a smile.)

ERMA Thank ya.

(Erma slips past Chester into the common room where NORMA concentrates on a sign-up sheet next to a bright yellow flier on the bulletin board.)

CHESTER Yes, ma'am.

(Her face behind the box once again, Erma runs square into BETTY who appears fascinated with the ceiling fan, her head bobbing in a circle. Chester hurries to steady Erma's box.)

ERMA Well, look at that, you saved me again.

CHESTER *(grinning)* I aim to please.

(Norma grabs Betty and yanks her down to the couch before slipping down the hallway. Erma shifts the weight of the box. Chester reaches toward it.)

CHESTER Why don't you let me?

ERMA Aren't you just the gentleman? But lucky for you, this damsel can take care of herself. *(Her hand slips as the box drops on the coffee table.)* Most of the time.

(They exchange a smile.)

ROSEMARY Chester, darling, time for lunch.

(ROSEMARY, tall and graceful, enters and settles a hand on Chester's arm.)

CHESTER Hmm? Oh, yes, lunch. *(to Erma)* Be careful with that.

(He turns and offers his arm to Rosemary which she takes. Betty reaches for his other arm, but a glare from Rosemary causes her to back away.)

ROSEMARY I heard Pat and Vanna were spinning the Wheel from France tonight.

CHESTER Can't wait!

(They glide into the dining room, leaving Erma with her huge box which she raises and then drops again with a thud, as the bright yellow piece of paper waves on the bulletin board in front of her. With a determined grin, she grabs it, hoists the box, and shuffles awkwardly down the hallway.)

SCENE 2

(Inside a conference room at the retirement home, Rosemary presides at the head of the large heavy table, with Norma and Betty on either side of her. GEORGE sits at the opposite end. All heads snap up when Erma bustles in.)

ROSEMARY May I help you?

(Erma pulls up a chair in the middle of the table and plops in it. George grins in welcome while the ladies simply stare.)

ROSEMARY I'm sorry, but we don't have any more available spots on the activities committee.

ERMA Every hand helps is what I always say. And I saw this *(pulls out the bright yellow flyer)*.

ROSEMARY What?

ERMA I'm Erma.

(She sticks out her hand, but only George seems to notice. They shake firmly.)

ROSEMARY We're going to have a tea.

GEORGE No. We're having a game night.

BETTY I wanted to dance.

ERMA A dance! Now there's an idea. I used to jitterbug, you know. On roller skates.

BETTY Rosemary, can we have roller skates?

GEORGE My great nephew plays the sax—

ERMA I've got a big balloon whatchamacallit!

ROSEMARY *(rising regally from her chair)* Quiet!

(Silence as Rosemary looms in front of them. She sits back down, her back erect.)

ROSEMARY Now. We will use my china, of course.

GEORGE No one wants to do your stupid tea, Rosie.

ERMA I collect those little painted teacups. Spoons too. I got me one all the way from hawa-eye.

(George sighs. Norma looks uncomfortable. Betty's eyes are fixed on the painting of a landscape on the wall.)

ROSEMARY Let's take an inventory, and meet back here tomorrow one o'clock sharp.

GEORGE *(saluting sarcastically)*. Ma'am, yes, ma'am!

(He does a sharp corner turn and then exits.)

ERMA I won't even have to take 'em out of the box!

(Erma scurries out the door. Rosemary grabs Norma's arm.)

ROSEMARY Watch her.

(Norma nods and hurries after Erma. Betty remains transfixed by the painting.)

SCENE 3

(Erma throws a different huge box down on the coffee table in the common room as its contents clatter against each other. Chester rests on the couch, Wheel of Fortune on the TV in front of him.)

ERMA Well, if it isn't my rescuer.

CHESTER Who, me?

(Erma drops next to him on the sofa. Norma peeks into the room.)

ERMA Hush up, now. I'm watching my show.

CHESTER and ERMA *(at the same time)* Mount McKinley.

(They share a smile as Norma slinks around the corner.)

ERMA What's a sweet guy like you doing sittin' here all alone?

CHESTER I'm not alone.

(They both stare at the TV for a moment.)

ERMA and CHESTER *(simultaneously)* Time flies when you're having fun.

(Rosemary, in a silk dressing gown and no make-up but carrying a red lipstick, bursts into the common room as Erma and Chester laugh.)

ROSEMARY Chester! I demand to know what you are doing with this woman!

ERMA Woo-hee!

(Erma jumps from the couch and runs toward Rosemary, making her recoil a bit. Erma reaches out and touches the sleeve of Rosemary's dressing gown, pinching it between her fingers.)

ERMA Why isn't this just about the prettiest thing I ever saw? Is this silk?

(Rosemary notices the lipstick in her hand next to her pink sleeve. Her hands fly to her face as it registers her horror. She clutches the sides of her robe and turns, right into George.)

GEORGE Looking good, Rosie!

(With a squeal, Rosemary flies down the hallway.)

ERMA That's one funny lady.

CHESTER *(still facing the TV)* Go on! Spin that wheel!

SCENE 4

(Erma again carries a huge box into the conference room, and throws it down on the table occupied by Norma, Betty, George, and Rosemary, who is wearing a blouse with lace buttoned up to her chin.)

GEORGE *(eyes twinkling)* That was quite a show you gave us last night, Rosie.

(Rosemary touches her throat.)

ERMA Are you all right?

ROSEMARY I'm fine. *(clearing her throat and nodding toward the box)* Your china, I presume?

ERMA Huh-uh. Whoo, those cups were tiny. These're for the band.

(She reaches into the box and pulls out a tambourine and some maracas.)

ROSEMARY There will be no band. This tea will be elegant, refined.

ERMA *(snapping her fingers)* I got just the thing.

(Erma rummages around in the box, and pulls out a huge disco ball like a trophy.)

ERMA What says high-falutin' better than this?

ROSEMARY *(under her breath)* A junk yard.

(George glares at Rosemary. She ignores him. Betty's eyes grow round as she grabs the disco ball.)

GEORGE These are perfect.

ERMA I was thinking about asking Chester. To the, uh, tea.

NORMA I don't think—

ERMA He's quite the looker, ain't he? Look real handsome on my arm.

(Rosemary glares, but Erma doesn't notice.)

ERMA Bet he's the gentleman-type too. Get me punch, hold my hand under the table—

ROSEMARY This is not your grandson's fifth birthday, a disco, or a high school prom! It's—

BETTY *(raising her hands and maracas she had found in Erma's box in the air)* Ooh! I know! I know!

ROSEMARY A tea!

ERMA So what activities do y'all do at this shindig?

ROSEMARY It's a tea.

ERMA Exactly. What's the fun stuff?
GEORGE There isn't any.
NORMA We dress nice, drink high tea, and have stimulating conversation.
BETTY And you promised me finger sandwiches. *(sits resignedly down in her chair, maracas in hand)*
ERMA Y'all sit around in fancy outfits doing nothing but starin' at each other and eatin' rabbit food? *(leans back)* No wonder no one's comin'.
ROSEMARY Excuse me? Norma, give me the list.

(Rosemary rips the sign-up sheet out of Norma's hands as she pulls out her glasses.)

ROSEMARY Four names? George! You're on the committee!
GEORGE *(with a satisfied grin)* It's fun to watch your plans go up in smoke.

(Betty grabs the list and begins to fill in names.)

ERMA Don't worry. I'll get Chester to sign up. With my feminine wiles.
ROSEMARY *(coughs)* Actually, I will talk to Chester myself. *(slides back in her chair)* Meeting adjourned.

(Rosemary flies out the door. Norma huffs and puffs behind her. The door slams, and Erma turns on her heel.)

ERMA Y'all up for a rogue operation?

(George's impish grin returns. Betty's eyes fill with glee as she shakes her maracas).

SCENE 5

(In the common room, Betty shakes her maracas, as DAVE strums on the guitar and BEA sits at the piano. Carrying a ladder to the center of the room, Erma sets it up and begins to climb. George holds it steady for her and hands her the disco ball. She reaches to attach it to the ceiling. Rosemary glides through the door, her arm through Chester's.)

ROSEMARY What. Are. You. Doing.
ERMA Everyone wanted to have a dance, so I thought maybe we could do both—

(Rosemary stalks over to Betty, pulling the maracas out of her hands.)

ROSEMARY You thought wrong. George, put those instruments away this instant.

(Dave strums his guitar as Erma climbs down the ladder.)

GEORGE No.
ROSEMARY Excuse me?
BETTY I want to dance!

(Betty twirls around the group as Dave sidesteps her and comes to stand beside Erma.)

ROSEMARY I refuse to have MY tea besmirched by these . . . these shenanigans!
DAVE Then let's vote. Right now.
ROSEMARY You're not even on—
GEORGE *(standing with the others)* Oh, shut it, Rosie. Let us have fun for once.
ERMA All those in favor of a dance?

(Dave, George, Bea, and Erma raise their hands. Betty raises two hands. Even Norma raises her hand.)

ROSEMARY *(to Norma)* You?
NORMA I like fun.
ROSEMARY Fine. Have your garish party.

(Her brow wrinkles as she turns. Chester follows.)

CHESTER I'm sorry you're disappointed.
ROSEMARY *(leaning closer to Chester)* How about some tea right now? Just you and me?
CHESTER Why, I believe that sounds nice.

(Rosemary catches the daggers Erma's eyes are sending her and smiles. She grabs Chester's arm again as he leads her down the hallway. Erma sidles up to Betty.)

ERMA *(whispering)* You got any black panty hose?

SCENE 6

(Erma and Betty, wearing all black, creep along the side of the building through the flower beds. They bend down, even though the windows are a foot above their heads. Erma wears panty hose over her face, and Betty has them wrapped around her head like a turban.)

ERMA Can't see a blasted thing.

(Erma rips the panty hose off her head as they stop at a window with light shining through it. In the window, Rosemary and Chester drink tea. They laugh as they watch Wheel of Fortune.)

(Both Erma and Betty stand on their tiptoes trying to see, but neither can. Erma jumps. Then Betty. Then Erma. Then Betty. Erma stops and gets on all fours. She motions for Betty to climb on top. Betty shakes her head. Erma stretches out one hand to help her up. Betty lifts a foot up, placing it on Erma's back. She grabs hold of the windowsill and jumps. They collapse and something snaps.)

ERMA *(whispering)* Betty? Was that you?
BETTY Uh-huh.
ERMA Oh my good Lord in heaven. Someone call 911!
BETTY Don't worry. I have band-aids.

(She pulls out a broken stick from under her along with a band-aid. She bandages the stick together. The window opens above them. Erma seizes the stick from Betty, throwing it away and then bodily drags her to the wall under the window, plastering them both to it. Chester sticks his head out the window, but Rosemary puts her hand on his arm.)

ROSEMARY Chester? Won't you come finish your tea?

CHESTER I thought— *(he turns from the window)* Well, the Wheel's over. I should probably go.

ROSEMARY Already?

(The window shuts. After a second's hesitation, both Erma and Betty take off.)

SCENE 7

(Erma speeds down the hallway and halts near Rosemary's door, pressing herself against the wall. She shoos Betty away. Betty opens her door across the hall and tiptoes inside it. Rosemary's door opens.)

ROSEMARY So, I'll see you at the dance?

CHESTER You betcha.

(Rosemary closes her door behind Chester. Erma falls into step with him.)

ERMA Rosemary's not making you all stuffy is she?

CHESTER *(grinning)* Who?

ERMA You're funny.

CHESTER *(stopping in front of his door)* Off to bed.

ERMA I'll look for ya at the dance.

CHESTER A woman with a plan. I like it.

(Erma heads back down the hallway, smiling. Rosemary peeks through the crack in her door and then closes it.)

SCENE 8

(Rosemary sits on the sofa in the common room, slides on her glasses, and opens a book. A loud bang causes her head to snap up. Erma stumbles into the room, her arms full of potato chips and chocolate cake.)

ERMA I was wrong before. *(She dumps her load on the table)* What're you reading there?

ROSEMARY *(slipping her book under the couch cushion)* Nothing of importance.

ERMA Did you try some warm milk?

ROSEMARY I'm sorry?

ERMA To help with the sleeping.

(Erma plops down beside Rosemary, her saucer of cake in one hand and a mug in the other. Erma slides the mug over to Rosemary.)

ERMA Truce?

(Rosemary considers and then puts the cup to her lips and takes a drink. After pulling over a coaster and setting the mug on it, Rosemary reaches underneath her and pulls out the book, handing it to Erma. Erma slides the glasses off Rosemary's nose and puts them on herself. Rosemary reaches for them, but then pulls back.)

ERMA Famous Words and Catchphrases. How about that?

(Erma reaches into her nightdress and pulls out the same book.)

ERMA Study together? Tomorrow night. Six o'clock.

ROSEMARY That sounds agreeable.

ERMA By *Wheel of Fortune* time, we'll be ready.

ROSEMARY Just as long as you stay away from Chester.

ERMA Excuse me? *(Her plate clatters as she drops it on the coffee table)*
Wait just a minute there, missy.

(Erma snatches the mug from Rosemary's hands. Rosemary yanks it back.)

ROSEMARY He's mine.

ERMA Then why's he been flirtin' with me? *(scooting to the edge of the couch)*

ROSEMARY Of all the lowdown, country hicks— *(matches Erma, scoot for scoot)*

ERMA You want a war, you got one.

ROSEMARY *(standing)* May the best woman win.

ERMA *(popping off the sofa)* Don't worry. She already has.

(Erma stalks off down the hallway. Rosemary starts to follow, but pauses for a second. Then she stalks down the hallway after her.)

SCENE 9

(Many elderly people in their finest attire litter the common room splashed with as many tacky decorations as the room can accommodate. A few people are already dancing in the middle of the floor as an elderly band play an oldie on stage. Erma bustles around, spotting Chester near the table of barbecue mini-wienies.)

ERMA Yoo-hoo! Chester!

CHESTER *(turning with a smile)* Hello there, pretty lady.

ERMA Aren't we going to dance?

(Rosemary appears beside them with Norma running after her.)

ROSEMARY I don't think so.

NORMA Rosemary, they need the event organizer on stage.

(Rosemary pauses in indecision, and finally strides up to the stage.)

ERMA Oh no she doesn't. *(runs up to the stage)*

ROSEMARY *(into a microphone)* Thank you all so much for coming.

ERMA *(grabbing the microphone from Rosemary)* Having a great time, y'all?

(The crowd cheers.)

ERMA How about that food?

(Another cheer.)

ERMA And the band?

(Loudest cheer yet. Rosemary yanks the microphone back.)

ROSEMARY *(to Erma)* You're making a fool of yourself. *(in the mic)* Don't forget this is all possible through your donations. There—

ERMA *(pushing her head against Rosemary's to talk in the mic)* I for one would rather be dancing with my date, Chester, so—

ROSEMARY He is NOT your date.

(The crowd goes silent.)

ERMA Honey, I think I know my own date.

ROSEMARY I knew you were delusional, but—

ERMA Let's just ask him.

(All eyes turn to Chester, who looks surprised.)

ERMA Just tell her, honey.

CHESTER Tell who . . . what?

ERMA and ROSEMARY *(together)* YOU are MY date!

CHESTER I am? Whose date?

ERMA Chester, honey, are you feeling all right?

ROSEMARY Are you ill?

CHESTER *(appearing flustered)* I'm—

BETTY Ooh! I know! Um . . . he's got that one thing. What you do call it?
(she bangs her palm against the side of her head) Am . . . As . . .
Alzheimer's!

ERMA and ROSEMARY *(together)* What?!

BETTY Told me last month. Guess I forgot.

(Rosemary's and Erma's heads swing toward Chester. He gives them a blank grin.)

ROSEMARY She can't be serious?

CHESTER I'm sorry. What were we talking about?

(Rosemary and Erma turn to each other, shocked.)

ROSEMARY Isn't that just like a man?

ERMA I say, who needs them?

(Erma offers her arm and Rosemary takes it. They head off the stage to the dance floor. Dave reaches for Erma's hand.)

DAVE I do believe you are one fine lady. May I have this dance?

(Erma pauses until George grabs Rosemary's hand.)

ROSEMARY But you hate me.

GEORGE You only think that because I love you.

(The women exchange a smile and separate, dancing back to back, each with their respective partners. Chester and Betty sit in the corner holding hands, both with oblivious smiles on their faces. In front of them sits the TV and on it, the spinning wheel of Wheel of Fortune.)

BLACKOUT.