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Volume Two erroneously spelled the artist's name. Our apologies and continued thanks go to Caitlin Whitehead.

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Minding the Gaps: The Semiotic as Gender Subversion in *Mulholland Dr.*

BY
Laura Stamm

In Judith Butler's landmark feminist text, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, she provides an extensive explication of gender identity acquisition, rooting the process in performance and performativity. Yet, Butler neglects to explain how a subject makes the leap from performance to performativity; that is, how individual acts or citations form a continuous narrative of identity. If we think of singular gender performances as film cells and the implied intervals between acts as cuts, we arrive at model of gender performativity best described in cinematic terms. In *Methodology of the Oppressed*, Chela Sandoval describes identity as cinematic: "Differential consciousness represents a strategy of oppositional ideology that functions on an altogether different register. Its powers can be thought of as mobile—not nomadic, but rather *cinematographic*: a kinetic motion that maneuvers, poetically transfigures, and orchestrates while demanding alienation, perversion, and reformation in both spectators and practitioners" (44). Sandoval defines a radical re-conception of identity as filmic movement that calls for the denaturalization of both conventional spectatorship and cinematic practices. To implement this denaturalization, I argue that theories of gender subversion must first address what allows the subject to perceive her identity as a continuous narrative. It is only with continuity's source identified that we can discuss the disruptive potential of the intervals it suppresses; Kristeva's *chora* is what provides the filling in of gaps that arise with individual performances. To demonstrate the cinematic nature of identity formation and the disorder that occurs when *chora* bubbles to the surface, I turn to the film *Mulholland Dr.*, reading the film for its representations of gender identity and figuration of *chora*.

Julia Kristeva's project of semanalysis functions to deconstruct the phallogentrism in psychoanalysis, as her concept of the se-

miotic provides an effective modification to the symbolic order. By contrasting the fluidity of meaning and heterogeneity of the semiotic with the closed down signification of the symbolic order, Kristeva constructs the semiotic as full of subversive potential. More specifically, the semiotic *chora*, with its access to the pre-Oedipal phase, becomes the space for subversion. Because of their subversive importance, Kristeva's concepts of *chora* and the abject are crucial to the model of gender performativity presented in Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*.

The foundation of Kristeva's project lies in her description of the relationship between the semiotic and symbolic orders. The semiotic order describes the drives and energies characteristic of the pre-Oedipal phase. Further, the semiotic "provides the *matter*, the impetus, and the subversive potential of all signification. It is the 'raw material' of signification, the corporeal, libidinal matter that must be harnessed and appropriately channeled for social cohesion and regulation" (Grosz, "Jacques Lacan" 151). Because semiotic drives, energies, and articulations are indeterminate and not closed down to a specific meaning, semiotics allows for fluidity of signification and the flowing of *jouissance*, or inarticulable pleasure. In this regard, semiotics captures the heterogeneous nature of language.

In contrast to the semiotic, the symbolic order represents the oedipalized language system, regulated by the Law of the Father. To become a speaking subject, one must take up the symbolic order and align oneself with the phallic law. The symbolic order consists of the rules, signification, and singular meaning "superimposed on the semiotic order" (Grosz, "Jacques Lacan" 152). Kristeva's description of the symbolic order's regulation of the semiotic leads to her development of a critical theory known as *semanalysis*. According to Kristeva, *semanalysis* works "as a mode of thought which subverts established beliefs in authority and order" (24). *Seanalysis* looks at language as a system of signification and, thus, seeks to uncover the heterogeneity inherent to language, but closed down by the symbolic order.

Kristeva defines the space that makes possible the semiotic order's heterogeneity of language as *chora*. *Chora* is defined by the pre-Oedipal phase, and its primary processes, "which are 'energy' charges as well as 'psychical' marks, articulate what we call a *chora*:"

a non-expressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated” (Kristeva 93). In this manner, the *chora* is not only the space for the maternal body, but it is also the space for the disruptive dimension of language. Through its disruption of the signification of the symbolic order, *chora* functions as the semiotic space for subversion. Because *chora* disrupts the symbolic ordering of meaning, the *chora* must consequently be repressed in order for the subject to take up its position in the symbolic order. Kristeva explains this repression in terms of the *thetic* phase; she explains, “the semiotic continuum must be split if signification is to be produced. This splitting (*coupure*) of the semiotic *chora* is the *thetic* phase (from *thesis*), enabling the subject to attribute differences and thus signification to what was the ceaseless heterogeneity of the *chora*” (13). For the subject to recognize itself as a unified subject, it must repress *chora* of language in favor of symbolic significations.

Kristeva borrows the term *chora*, the Greek word for womb or enclosed space, from Plato and reappropriates the term to fit her subversive project. In Plato’s work *Timaeus*, he describes “a mythological bridge between the intelligible and the sensible, mind and body, which he calls *chora*” (Grosz, “Space, Time, and Perversion” 112). However, he later goes on to discuss *chora* in terms of a female lack or as an empty holding space waiting for meaning. According to Grosz, “Plato cannot specify any particular properties or qualities for *chora*: if one could attribute it any specificity it would immediately cease to have its status as intermediary or receptacle and would instead become an object (or quality or property)” (“Space, Time, and Perversion” 114). Kristeva subverts Plato’s phallogocentric description of *chora* by defining it in terms of positive attributes and presenting it as a space of radical potential. Moreover, Kristeva’s *chora* allows for the subversion of the symbolic order’s closed down meanings, such as Plato’s definition of *chora*, and the disruption of phallogocentric language.

Because of the way in which Kristeva positions the two separate orders, many critiques of her work, including the one offered in *Gender Trouble*, often charge her with essentialism in her supposed description of woman as nature (the semiotic order) and man as culture (the symbolic order). Butler critiques Kristeva’s supposed essentialism by writing, “Kristeva describes the maternal body

as bearing a set of meanings that are prior to culture itself. She thereby safeguards the notion of culture as a paternal structure and delimits maternity as an essentially precultural reality. Her naturalistic descriptions of the maternal body reify motherhood and preclude an analysis of its cultural construction and variability” (109). However, a close reading of Kristeva’s work reveals that she is aware of the dangers of essentialism and attempts to avoid them. Interestingly, and in contradiction to the criticism that Butler levies, Kristeva points out that despite the fact that *chora* is associated with the maternal, it is a space accessible to men and women alike. The subversive potential of *chora* for language and literature lies in its disembodiment from the female body. Kristeva, in fact, cites avant-garde male authors, such as Joyce and Kafka, for their ability to access the semiotic *chora* in their writing. Avant-garde writers access the *chora* through their “renewing and reshaping of status of meaning within social exchanges to a point where the very order of language is being renewed” (Kristeva 32). These male authors demonstrate how Kristeva’s *chora* allows for the separation of femininity from the maternal or female body and, thus, challenges many of the critiques of essentialism attached to Kristeva’s work. As Kristeva uses male avant-garde writers as exemplars of those able to access *chora*, I will now turn to avant-garde filmmaker David Lynch to show how his constructions of femininity and experimental film practices figure *chora*. By exposing the ever-present gaps, Lynch’s films upset gender performance and visualize the possibility of gender subversion.

Lynch’s work utilizes feminine experimentation not only in its play with gender, but also in its break with conventional cinematic practices. Kristeva positions femininity “as different or other in relation to language and meaning, but nevertheless only thinkable within the symbolic, and therefore also necessarily subject to the Law. Maintaining such a finely balanced position is far from easy, and Kristeva herself has from time to time written about femininity in terms which would seem to equate the feminine with the ‘semiotic’ or the pre-Oedipal” (11). Kristeva recognizes the difficulty and contradiction involved in attempting to theorize the “untheorizable” *chora* and, similarly, acknowledges the occasional slippages in her argument. Yet, whether or not Kristeva posits a before-the-law in her project, I contend that much her theoriza-

tions of the abject and *chora* are crucial components to the model of gender identity acquisition Butler outlines in *Gender Trouble*.

To demonstrate the importance of Kristeva's *chora* for Butler's model of identity formation, I will read Lynch's film *Mulholland Dr.* (2001) through this lens, paying attention to the film's figuration of *chora* and the subversive potential afforded by this reading. Furthermore, I want to use semanalysis to provide an alternative reading of the film; many scholars write about *Mulholland Dr.* in terms that close down the film's slippery meaning and makes it easily determined by phallogentric, symbolic language. *Mulholland Dr.* begins with a car crash that leaves a woman, who becomes known as Rita, amnesic. When Rita takes refuge in a stranger's house, she meets Betty, a perky, blonde ingénue actress, who attempts to help her discover her former identity. Their quest to uncover Rita's former life takes an unexpected turn when the two women enter Club Silencio. Commonly, writers read the first part of the film with Rita and Betty before the blue box, discovered at Club Silencio, as a fantasy, and everything after the box's opening as the film's grim reality. This interpretation, or more accurately simplification, creates a narrative that is easily expressed in symbolic language. However, Lynch's film functions in opposition to determinability and decidability, instead forming a filmic text full of fluid meaning and disruptive gaps. In place of reading the opening of the blue box as the end of a fantasy and the beginning of the film's "reality," I read it as the return of the repressed *chora*. The release of *chora* and its ability to speak disrupts the film's previously established gender identities and replaces continuity with chaos. In fact, as *chora* upsets the narrativized gender identities, it also upsets the film's narrative structure by making impossible the fulfilling resolve the spectator anticipates.

Mulholland Dr. opens with men and women dressed in 1950s style clothing and dancing the jitterbug. It may seem odd for the film to open in this manner as it soon transitions to present-day Hollywood, but this opening and 50s nostalgia that crops up throughout the film work as markers of the fantasy of stable gender relations signaled by that era. Indeed, after the end of WWII and the men's return home, the gender fluidity women experienced during the war was closed down due to its threatening potential. Post-war anxieties surrounding masculinity were assuaged by

women's re-domestication along with a strong investment in traditional femininity and masculinity. This opening is then quite appropriate as the first part of the film represents heteronormative, "successful" gender acquisition. Before the opening of the blue box, and with *chora* still repressed, identity formation takes place in the way that Butler describes in *Gender Trouble*—the abject, mirror stage, and gender continuity all present.

Representations of the abject appear several times during the film, especially towards the beginning, in order to provide an "Other" for which the subject to establish itself against. Butler uses Kristeva's concept of the abject in *Gender Trouble* to mark the crucial step in the subject's recognition of its bodily boundaries: "the 'abject' designates that which has been expelled from the body, discharged as excrement, literally rendered 'Other.' This appears as an expulsion of alien elements, but the alien is effectively established through this expulsion" (181). This expulsion of bodily fluids allows the subject to establish physical boundaries as it distinguishes between the "me" (body) and "not-me" (waste materials excreted from the body). For example, during the pre-Oedipal phase, "the mother's body acts with the child's as a sort of socio-natural continuum. This period is dominated by the oral and anal drives of incorporation and aggressive rejection: hence the pleasure is auto-erotic as well as inseparable from the mother's body" (Kristeva 148). The excretion of the mother's milk becomes necessarily rendered abject in order for the subject to recognize itself as othered from the maternal body. The construction of the mother's milk as a "not-me" enables the subject to move from semiotic maternal identification to its place as a speaking subject in the symbolic order. As a result, Butler takes up the abject to explicate how the subject must other herself from the mother to become a speaking subject "I." The first instance of the abject in *Mulholland Drive* occurs only a few minutes in with the monstrous "bum", a barely human-like figure steeped in filth and horror, outside of Winkie's diner. Other abject occurrences follow: the spewing of espresso, dog shit, and Diane's dead, decomposing body. Besides Diane's body, these depictions of the abject seem strange inclusions, but I argue that they make possible the normative gender identities that the opening of the blue box and return of *chora* disrupt.

This recognition of a “me” and “not-me” becomes fully realized in the film when the previously anonymous Rita adopts her name. In the Lacanian model of ego formation that Butler adapts, Lacan proposes “that human identity or ego is formed during the Mirror Stage, when an infant first encounters itself as a separate entity, typically through its reflection in a mirror” (Chaudhuri 34). After Rita gets out of the shower and stands gazing in front of the mirror, the scene actually contains two mirrors: one reflecting the yet unnamed character and another attached mirror reflecting a *Gilda* movie poster featuring its star, Rita Hayworth. In an act congruous with both the mirror stage and Butler’s theorization of gender as citational, Rita simultaneously recognizes herself as a subject and cites Hayworth’s feminine identity. By identifying herself in this manner, Rita’s acquisition of identity follows the normative model set up by the film’s preceding narrative.

Butler describes this model of gender performativity that Rita visualizes as a continuous repetition of specific gender performances or acts, stating, “the subject is not *determined* by the rules through which it is generated because signification is not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects” (198). This process insinuates that there is no before- the-law that endows the subject with an inherent code of gender identity or characteristics. Instead, the subject is socially constructed through the repetitive citations of culturally intelligible gender performances. Butler elaborates, “the rules that govern intelligible identity, i.e., that enable and restrict the intelligible assertion of an ‘I’, rules that are partially structured along matrices of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality, operate through repetition” (198). Therefore, for a subject to become an “I”, one must constantly perform individual acts that allow the subject to see itself as having a continuous, narrativized gender identity.

Because Butler’s concept of gender is based on repeated singular acts of gender performance, her argument suggests that there then must be intervals or gaps between acts. Additionally, these singular acts point out the “trouble” with gender found in the otherwise comprehensive model of gender acquisition Butler presents. By separating gender performativity into individual constitutive acts, she implicitly highlights the intervals between

acts that threaten to disrupt narrative gender identity. Despite the intervals between acts, though, we see ourselves as continuous, unified subjects. What is implicit, but never discussed, in Butler's argument, then, is the reason gender performativity appears as a continuous narrative. In order to explain the gaps between acts of gender performance, I turn to Kristeva's concept of *chora*.

For one to become a speaking subject in the symbolic order, the maternal body must be abjected and *chora* repressed. Though repressed, the semiotic *chora* maintains an important role in the subject's gender identity. Kristeva explicates the unknowable existence of *chora*:

The kinetic functional stage of the *semiotic* precedes the establishment of the sign; it is not, therefore, cognitive in the sense of being assumed by a knowing, already constituted subject. The genesis of the *functions* organizing the semiotic process can be accurately elucidated only within a theory of the subject that does not reduce the subject to one of understanding, but instead opens up within the subject this other scene of pre-symbolic functions (95).

Chora operates as the space in between slippages and ruptures in repetitions of gender performance. *Chora* is the means by which gender performativity can appear to be a series of performances whose gaps or intervals in between, like the cuts in a film edited for continuity, remain invisible and unnoticed. In other words, *chora* provides the unconscious filling of gaps in between singular gender performances. Because individual gender performances do act similar to individual film cells, I believe that it is why film provides an effective means for understanding *chora's* function.

The narrative, continuous gender performativity Rita models in the bathroom scene continues until the appearance and successive opening of the blue box. The box first materializes during the scenes at Club Silencio where the film breaks narratively and visually from the prior scenes, thus suggesting the chaos about to ensue. When Rita and Betty enter the club, the man on stage walks around shouting "no hay banda (there is no band)" and upon this announcement, the two women clasp hands in a signaling of the scene's building anxiety. Soon afterwards, as the man announces

that everything in Club Silencio “is all an illusion,” Betty begins to convulse in her seat. Directly following her convulsion, blue lights and smoke fill the stage, and the camera wanders up into the balcony to reveal a woman with blue hair seated above the stage. These elements not only predict the disorientation to come, but also hint at the arrival of the blue box with their evocative color.

The scene allows for the suspension of disbelief when the singer takes the stage and delivers a seemingly believable performance. As she sings “Llorando (crying),” Rita and Betty cry in the audience in what looks like an identification with the woman on stage. The performance proceeds with this sense of reality until the singer faints and the tape recording continues to play “Llorando.” After the woman on stage faints, Betty reaches for her purse and opens it to find the blue box, both Rita and Betty gazing at it in wonderment. When two men carry the singer offstage with the music still playing, the scene reveals that indeed, it is all an illusion—explicitly, the show at Club Silencio and, implicitly, gender identity, a performance that appears to be a continuous narrative due to the repressed *chora*.

Betty and Rita rush home where Rita locates the blue key previously discovered in her own purse. In a close-up shot of the blue box, Rita inserts the key into its triangle-shaped keyhole and as she opens the box, the camera funnels into the box pulling the spectator into the film’s *chora*. I recognize in the blue box’s characteristics of unruliness, disruption, and undefined space the film’s figuration of *chora*. In addition, the box works as an apropos representation due to *chora*’s frequent equation with a receptacle space; in fact, semiotics is often described as drawing “its sustenance from the *chora*, a term meaning ‘receptacle’ or ‘enclosure’” (Chaudhuri 54). Opening the box represents the release of the suppressed *chora* and the subsequent possibilities for disruption or subversion. This disruption comes through the film’s rejection of the symbolic order’s need to make meaning through an intelligible narrative.

Mulholland Dr.’s rejection of symbolic meaning and its accompanying traditional film practices becomes visualized in its refusal of continuous narrative and making visible the intervals or cuts between performances. The film’s utilization of the gaps disrupts normative cinematic practice in much the same way that it dis-

rupts normative gender identification. Through his experimental filmmaking, Lynch uses film language that disrupts Hollywood's traditional representations of women that silence them to fulfill male fantasy. By exposing the intervals between acts, Lynch's work creates the filmic opposite of the male gaze that Laura Mulvey puts forth in her influential argument; that is, women as object of the gaze works to resolve narrative, fulfill pleasure in Hollywood mainstream cinema. Mulvey contends that "in narrative cinema, woman plays a 'traditional exhibitionistic role'—her body is held up as a passive erotic object for the gaze of male spectators, so that they can project their fantasies on to her" (Chaudhuri 35). Mulvey views the avant-garde as a counter-cinema that provides a space for alternative images of women. In the essay "Feminism, Film and Avant-Garde," Mulvey fleshes out avant-garde cinema as the means for subverting dominant cinema that utilizes woman as for her looked-at-ness. Minding the gaps and looking at *chora* underlying gender performance in Lynch's *Mulholland Dr.* illuminates why Mulvey finds disruptive potential in avant-garde film.

With the return of the repressed *chora* in *Mulholland Dr.*, women no longer function as vehicles for the film's fulfillment of symbolic narration, but instead work to refuse symbolic meaning. Like Club Silencio's split between sound and reality that reveals that it is all an illusion, *chora's* disruptive force reveals the construction or illusion that is symbolic meaning and normative gender identity. In an exemplification of this disruption of the film's previous reflection of heteronormative identity formation, after the opening of the blue box, it returns to Diane's dead body that was previously abjected. In what I read as a rethinking of the symbolic order's gender performativity, the film returns to the bed containing Diane's body to reconsider its previous reflection of gender acquisition.

On a very basic level, Betty and Rita's changed identities are immediately exposed through their change of names, Diane and Camilla, respectively. The film's rethinking of the women's (gender) identity is further seen in its linking together of disjointed scenes such as the dinner party towards the end of the film. Diane's car ride to the party is reminiscent of Rita's car accident in the opening with the car drifting down Mulholland Drive. After Diane and Camilla enter the party and Coco, the party's host,

urges them inside, the image on screen becomes blurred and out of focus. When the image finally comes into focus, it only does so with a shaking camera and the playing of disconcerting music, the shaking of the camera visualizing disruption. After the exchange of stilted, denaturalized dialogue, the camera once again shakes and goes out of focus, ending up in focus on a close-up of Diane's espresso, suggestive of the abject spitting and spewing of espresso earlier in the film. As the scene progresses, Camilla and Adam's smiles, laughter, and forced dialogue seem to mock and torment Diane with their happiness as a heteronormative couple. The music builds to eminent doom with what can be assumed to be the happy couple's announcement of their engagement. The naturalized heteronormativity that Camilla and Adam act out stands in contrast to the shaking camera's denaturalization of cinematic practices.

Mulholland Dr.'s ending scenes fully realize its opening up of *chora*. In Winkie's, the man, in reference to the blue key, tells Diane that "when it's finished, you'll find this where I told you," a reminder that the film ends not with narrative closure fulfilled by women's looked-at-ness but with disorientation and a refusal of meaning. When Diane asks what the key opens, the spectator is led outside of the restaurant to the site of the terrifyingly abject figure seen early on in the film. The posing of the monstrous bum with the blue box reminds the viewer that the key opens up and releases the repressed *chora*. Moreover, positioning the abject and *chora* together mirrors the disruption of gender identity formation as the women are no longer unidentified with abject as a "not me" but identified with it; Diane's consumption of espresso at the dinner party illustrates this disintegration of "me" and "not-me" boundary.

When the "bum" drops the blue box, the camera zooms in to focus on the box inside a brown paper bag (once again associating the box with garbage and the abject). The extreme close-up of the bag exposes tiny old people scurrying out with quick editing, jerky motion, darkness, and flashing blue light all disorienting the spectator. The old people's laughter and chilling music highlight the scene's chaos as it suddenly shifts to a shot of the blue key. Showing the key on the coffee table represents once again that this disorder will end the film. The squealing and screaming of the old people, knocking, and close-up of Betty's heavy breathing evokes

extreme discomfort in the viewer. The old people instantaneously grow to full size and chase after Diane with the blue light, rapid editing, terrifying music that fully create the scene's disorientation. Similar to the dinner party scene, this elderly couple represents an ideal heteronormativity reminiscent of the film's jitterbug opening.

The film's chaos comes to a close with its ending scene at Club Silencio. This return to Club Silencio reinforces it as the catalyst of the *chora's* return. The empty stage and the blue-haired woman who whispers "silencio" communicate the failure of phallogentric language and narration to end the film along with the incommensurability of *chora* and the symbolic order. *Mulholland Dr.* turns to exposing the film's gaps in order to disrupt stable gender identity, a subversion that remains inarticulable in symbolic language. Because the *chora's* release upsets the continuity of the symbolic order, this subversion necessitates a mode of expression with access to the semiotic order—a feminine expression or language speaks through vehicles that symbolic language or phallogentric logic cannot account for. In film, the semiotic, as opposed to the symbolic, manifests as a disruption, a fissure; it exceeds the boundaries created by phallogentric thought and language. The film does not allow the spectator at its closure to still have the pleasure of viewing Rita as the quintessential femme fatale and Betty as the fresh, naive ingénue. Through its reopening of *chora* and rendering visible the cuts in between acts, the film rejects traditional cinematic practices that relegate women to stabilized gender roles that fulfill narrative resolution.

Reading *Mulholland Dr.* for the film's figuration of the return of the repressed *chora* offers a semiotic reconsideration of gender subversion. Kristeva states that when we refer to semiotics, "we mean the (as yet unrealized) development of models, that is, of formal systems whose structure is isomorphic or analogous to the structure of another system (the system under study)" (76). Paying attention to a film's gaps and fissures allows us to see *chora's* significance for Butler's theory of gender performativity. If the possibility for gender subversion takes place in the intervals between acts as Butler's argument suggests, to successfully disrupt heteronormative gender identity, we must first understand what renders those intervals invisible. Accordingly, an understanding of *chora's* role in gender performativity precedes an examination

of the temporal cuts in between each performance. Because of its ability to experiment with temporality and thereby visualize these gaps and intervals, avant-garde film is an ideal medium in which to consider the relationship of *chora* and performativity. Working through a film in this manner empowers feminist theory to reveal disruptive gender performances that stand in sharp contrast to mainstream Hollywood's use of repetitive performances.

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Marlowe's Portrayal of the Masculine Complex

BY

Jonathan Sanders

It is an undeniable fact that the leading or otherwise significant roles of Christopher Marlowe's plays are virtually monopolized by men. Furthermore, as Randall Martin puts it, Marlowe's plays "are defined by more uniformly masculinist assumptions" (72). Such a summation as Martin's could not be more appropriate for defining the roles of Marlowe's leading males. That is because, of these male figures, most appear on the surface to be rather simple, driven by base needs and instincts that lead them to obtain as much as they can, whether it be money, power, land, or knowledge (or some combination of these things); but as is the case with nearly any literary character, each of these male Marlovian figures can undergo the test of psychoanalysis, a process which can reveal them to be much deeper than initially suspected. Such analysis can specifically yield the deep-seeded motivations and desires that propel these characters to behave the way they do. And in the case of Marlowe's leading male figures, perhaps most notably those from the *Tamburlaine* plays, *Doctor Faustus*, and *Edward the Second*, we can reasonably attribute their behavior to the effects of some form of masculine identity complex.

Before delving into the specifics of Marlowe and his works, it is critical that we take a brief moment to understand the common threads linking masculinity complexes. In essence, any form of male complex—especially as pertaining to the characters in Marlowe's works—are rooted in a form of insecurity one has with oneself. In most cases, such a complex generally stems from a feeling of inadequacy. In other words, a man will feel uncertain (or insecure) with himself if he perceives something about himself that he and/or society deems as "unmanly." Such a "defect," if we may think of it as such, may be related to an aspect of the physical (e.g. being too short, as in the famous "Napoleon Complex"), the mental (e.g. not being as intelligent, clever or quick-witted

as someone else), the emotional (e.g. unable to avoid crying while reading love poetry), or the sexual (e.g. feeling threatened by homosexuality, or the famous “Oedipus Complex”). Such insecurities often cause men to feel anxiety toward their ability to feel authoritative, to be treated fairly or equally, to earn respect, to find a sexual partner, or to obtain the things they desire. But the root of the anxiety stems from the fear that they will neither be perceived as nor feel like a “true man.” They also tend to adhere to “the underlying premise that real men are made, not born” (Philaretou and Allen 301), and must take matters into their own hands to assert their masculinity. This is problematic because such insecure men are typified by a lack of confidence, and the idea of being solely responsible for asserting oneself leads to further anxieties. But some are willing, able and oftentimes desperate enough to do whatever is necessary to overcome their insecurities and inadequacies. To resolve their anxieties, men “are likely to redouble efforts to meet the hegemonic standard. That is, they are much more likely to internalize their feelings of inadequacy and seek to compensate or overcompensate for them” (Wienke 255). As to be examined in Marlowe’s works, this overcompensation comes in many forms, including egomania, anger, obsession, wrath, jealousy, self-loathing, and alienation.

Some of Marlowe’s critics account for such a recurring crisis of masculine identity by suggesting a connection between the life of the playwright and the lives of his characters. Constance Brown Kuriyama, for example, suggests “Marlowe was primarily concerned with working out for himself a satisfactory male identity, one that would . . . satisfy external demands that his manhood take socially acceptable forms” (107-108). Whether or not it was Marlowe’s intention to project these personal masculinist issues onto his characters will probably never be known for sure. But Martin believes evidence exists to conclude that Marlowe had “anxieties about nonmasculine authority” (82). Given the overwhelming gap separating male and female characters in positions of authority in his plays, it seems reasonable to suspect that Marlowe had some unsettled, perhaps even unconscious, insecurity that caused him to portray nearly all of his dominant figures as men (which are labeled “dominant” by way of title, personality, and even stage time)—e.g. kings, lords, patriarchs,

warriors. For Marlowe, such an unresolved internal struggle may have led to a complex of his own, one that, in his need to assert his own masculinity, also warped his perception of women. We see evidence of this idea in the fact that Marlowe's female characters are not only few and far between; they are submissive, lacking in personality, and, for the most part, made to fulfill stereotypical roles—e.g. mothers, daughters, wives, maids. Along the same note, Kuriyama says, "Marlowe was concerned with escaping the pernicious effeminizing influence of seductive maternal characters" (117). It is worth mentioning as a side note that three of Marlowe's more prominent female characters—Dido, Isabella, and Zenocrate—are shown to have seats of power and the potential for authority; but they are nonetheless consistently undermined and defied and, in one respect or another, worship a much more domineering masculine figure. Marlowe's compulsion to assert male dominance in his plays thus becomes difficult to cast off as mere coincidence. Therefore it seems reasonable to conclude that Marlowe's characters who exhibit masculinist complexes illustrate the playwright's own insecurities regarding the three issues that Ronald Huebert deems especially prevalent in Marlowe's life and work—authority, defiance, and desire (211-212).

As seen in the title character, the *Tamburlaine* plays portray the type of male figure whose identity complex revolves around authority, domination, power and a strict adherence to the principles of hegemonic masculinity. In a psychoanalytic effort to pinpoint Tamburlaine's motivations, Kuriyama believes that, for Tamburlaine, "the elusive object of perpetual quest was an acceptable and secure male identity" (217). We can observe Tamburlaine's quest for a dominant masculine identity in the very first scene he appears (Part I, Act I.ii). In his prolonged speech to win the loyalty of Theridamas, he boasts: "I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains" (I.I.ii.174); "Jove sometime maskèd in a shepherd's weed, / And by those steps that he hath scaled the heavens / May we become immortal like the gods" (I.I.ii.199-201). Eugene M. Waith points out, in his analysis of this speech, "Such self-praise might be taken as Marlowe's way of portraying a man who will say anything to get ahead or of pointing to the ironical contrast between a man's pride and his accomplishment" (66). By comparing himself to the gods, we are

given an initial sense of Tamburlaine's egomaniacal, narcissistic behavior, which proves to persist so flagrantly throughout both parts of his history that it becomes difficult *not* to question his motivations. Up until his death at the end of Part II, Tamburlaine goes on to perform deeds that one might deem psychotic (e.g. needlessly slaughtering virgins, trying to make Bajazeth eat his wife for sustenance, etc), most of which can be attributed to a masculine identity crisis. His senseless acts of bullying, belittling, torturing, murdering, and conquering suggest the male need to overcompensate for something about which he feels inadequate. As Kuriyama argues, Tamburlaine is "preoccupied with conquest," a tendency which appears to be "an attempt to fill a narcissistic void so immense that nothing in heaven or earth can satisfy it" (217). Waith agrees when he says that "domination of the earth represents the fulfillment of his mission—the fulfillment of himself (67). In one instance in Part II, Tamburlaine cuts his arm in front of his sons, an action which, according to Kuriyama, asserts "a proof of manhood" (115). The need to prove one's toughness by any means necessary (as in cutting oneself) exhibits a classic sign of a masculinity complex. Tamburlaine's incessant desire to showcase himself as a dominant, masculine conqueror thus suggests something deeper than what appears on the surface. That is, his actions, because they are often so needlessly callous, and are never enough to satisfy him, seem to be rooted in a psychological need to overcompensate for some unrevealed shortcoming or insecurity, one that Tamburlaine, whether he realizes it or not, makes him feel like he lacks masculinity.

While it is impossible to know for sure the cause of Tamburlaine's masculinity complex, one possible explanation could be his apparent fear of his own effeminacy. John P. Cutts argues this point when he asserts that "Tamburlaine is basically effeminate, possessed by an almost demoniacal need to compensate for this and for the mean estate of his birth" (vii). We see significant evidence for this claim as Tamburlaine delivers his "beauty" soliloquy in Act V of Part I. The soliloquy, which follows Zenocrate's plea to Tamburlaine that he spare the city of Damascus, entails a lengthy introspection on the principles of beauty and Tamburlaine's subsequent confusion over his newfound emotions. He cannot believe that beauty, something he thinks is meant only

for women, can affect him as it has. And perhaps even worse, he cannot believe that he is actually considering Zenocrate's plea that he not conquer Damascus. He says, "But how unseemly is it for my sex, / My discipline of arms and chivalry, / My nature, and the terror of my name, / To harbour thoughts effeminate and faint!" (I.V.i.174-177). Cutts believes that this statement proves "Tamburlaine's fear of unmanliness" (38). For Tamburlaine, the more land he conquers, the more secure his masculinity. To even consider not doing so, at the request of a woman no less, brings his authority and power into question. In this especially revealing moment of introspection, we see Tamburlaine become susceptible to the power of emotion; and while his guard is down, he allows what he calls "effeminate thoughts" into his head.

Tamburlaine's issue with effeminacy is clearly rooted in paranoia, which, when pertaining to one's masculinity, shows another clear sign of a complex. Kuriyama notes Tamburlaine's apparent thought process: "If masculinity is defined by the degree of one's success in struggles with men, and if women try to dissuade one from engaging in such competition, then they . . . are a dangerous effeminizing influence" (30). In other words, Tamburlaine fears that the influence of women will challenge his authority, and therefore his manhood. But there is perhaps one thing worse to Tamburlaine than if he were to feel the effects of femininity—namely, if someone were to know about it. Thus we get the closing line to his "beauty" soliloquy, "Who's within there?" (I.V.i.191), an utterance rife with paranoid delusion. Luckily for Tamburlaine, it appears that no one has overhead his inner femininity emerge in place of his typical showing of dominant masculinity. But Tamburlaine's paranoia does not disappear completely. We see later in his life, in Part II, his paranoia surrounding his son Calyphas, his "girlish little boy" (Waith 79) who poses a threat to his own masculinity. Tamburlaine cannot bear the thought that he could have produced such an effeminate boy, and we can argue that he does not want his subordinates (i.e. his soldiers, all of which are male), nor himself, to question his manhood because of it. Calyphas is therefore but another element in Tamburlaine's paranoid feelings toward his own effeminacy. Feeling insecure, and with no better—or "manlier"—option, Tamburlaine kills his own son. As Waith observes, Tamburlaine's murder of his son "is almost

a ritual killing—the extirpation of an unworthy part of himself” (80). With the murder of Calyphas, we see how far Tamburlaine is willing to go to assert his masculinity. Any threat brought on by his own paranoid fear will trigger the wrath of the dominant male to abolish any trace of femininity that plagues him.

Interestingly though, Tamburlaine is not the only character who exhibits the signs of a masculinity complex in the *Tamburlaine* plays; however, it is certainly fair to lay responsibility on him, since the other characters alluded to are, in fact, his own soldiers. Alan Shepard notes that the soldiers “depend on the patterns of culture, not only to bestow but also continually to verify their herculean identities” (736). Although their significance to the plot pales in comparison to the significance of Tamburlaine, the soldiers are worth mentioning since they are arguably mere projections of Tamburlaine, and therefore can be labeled with a similar, albeit less severe form of a masculinity complex. Essentially, the principle soldiers of Tamburlaine’s army—Theridamas, Techelles, and Usumcasane—play the part of toadies who carry out the egomaniacal, power-hungry will of their insecure leader. Blindly and unquestioningly they follow Tamburlaine, agreeing with his every position, a recurrent trend found in nearly every scene that includes them. For example, we see Theridamas echo Tamburlaine’s regular self-comparison with the gods when he states, “A god is not so glorious as a king. / I think the pleasure they enjoy in heaven / Cannot compare with kingly joys in earth” (I.II.v.57). Of course it can be argued that their willingness to follow is because they realize the danger of going against such a fierce and murderous leader. But we may also contend that they are motivated to follow Tamburlaine because doing so is tantamount to a guarantee of victory and power, and, therefore, a secure masculine identity. And so, all of Tamburlaine’s soldiers, whether they are given names or no, follow their leader’s every whim, conquering, torturing and killing, assured that what they are doing—i.e. following a courageous man whose masculinity no one would dare question—will keep their insecurities at bay.

In many ways, the masculinity complexes observed in the *Tamburlaine* plays are comparable to that which defines the title figure of Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*. Kuriyama agrees with this idea as she explains, “In short, Faustus is not substantially different

from Tamburlaine. His sphere is academic rather than military, his unconquered terrain intellectual as well as physical, but what he wants—indeed, must have—is essentially the same: unlimited power” (103). As discussed previously, Tamburlaine’s incessant desire for dominance and power is among the most significant contributors to his struggle to assert his masculinity. Faustus is no different, except that, as Cutts argues, “There is little . . . of an inferiority complex with regard to warrior manliness as with [Tamburlaine]” (115). That is to say, that while both Tamburlaine and Faustus are unquestionably out for absolute power, Faustus’s complex propels him to overcompensate for his insecurities by attaining knowledge and recognition, rather than—as is the case with Tamburlaine—blood and dominion. In essence, it is a matter of what motivates each character as a form of overcompensating that differentiates the two. Cutts notes that although “the particular nature of [Faustus’s] failings obviously distinguishes him considerably from . . . Tamburlaine,” his “inner drive to excel, to outdo everyone and everything, must stem from a very basic feeling of inferiority and inadequacy,” which affirms that “in this respect Faustus is similar to Tamburlaine” (115). It is easier for us to speculate what triggers these feelings of inferiority and inadequacy in Faustus than it is in Tamburlaine. In his opening speech, as he ponders the use of magic to attain the knowledge and power he desires, Faustus says, “O, what a world of profit and delight, / Of power, of honour, of omnipotence / Is promised to the studious man” (i.55-57). By admitting that he lacks these traits (power, honour, omnipotence), he in turn admits his insecurity with himself. He wants these powerful traits, and fears the worst if he cannot obtain them. Kuriyama believes that Faustus “may choose . . . to be either omnipotent or impotent, and anything less than omnipotence is tantamount to impotence” (104). Kuriyama concludes, “Faustus’s quest for power is a quest for unlimited sexual potency, for a firm and immutable male identity” (115). His insecurity is further illuminated by the fact that he not only turns to magic to overcome his inadequacies; he even goes so far as to trade his soul to Lucifer himself so he can obtain the power that he feels will make him a “real man.” However, it is worth considering that Faustus may equate masculinity to something beyond the earthly idea of that concept. That is, for Faustus,

being a man is not good enough, as he admits in his opening speech: "Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man" (i.23). Here, as he "confesses to the limitations of man" (Cutts 112), he admits his belief that he cannot overcome his inferiority complex unless he matches the level of power and knowledge of the gods. (And here, we should note, we see yet another striking resemblance to Tamburlaine). To be a man—which in Faustus's case might as well be used interchangeably with the word "human"—does not and cannot make one truly powerful, and thus does not make one truly masculine.

Of course, Faustus does eventually obtain the power for which he has expressed his desire after completing his bargain with Lucifer via Mephistopheles. But this development leads to another issue that ties directly into the male complex. As Kenneth L. Golden explains, the power-wielding Faustus "has succumbed to what Jung calls ego-inflation, a chief danger encountered by Renaissance man (as well as modern man) with his one-sided intellect which values knowledge for the 'technological,' manipulative power it gives over things and other people" (203). But actually, Faustus's ego begins to swell only with the knowledge that his desires will soon come to fruition. After dismissing Mephistopheles's advice that he withdraws his request for omnipotence at the price of damnation of his soul, Faustus dares to tell his demonic guide-servant, "Learn thou of Faustus manly fortitude" (iii.87). With this statement, Faustus unwittingly informs us that he has an inexplicable need to prove himself a man. Thus it seems that his entire basis for going through with the self-damning process is to prove that this option (i.e. trading his soul for unlimited power) is something that only one with "manly fortitude" would be brave enough to do. And because he has already established his need for power—and in turn a confirmation of his own masculinity—he will hardly entertain the idea of *not* going through with the deal.

Once the deal is in place, Faustus's ego becomes even more inflated. After being refused a wife by Mephistopheles, Faustus demands, "fetch me one, for I will have one" (v.146-147). In this scene, Huebert asserts that Faustus proves himself as "a reckless man . . . he wants the game to continue because he thinks he can win" (221). Despite the fact that he is bargaining with the devil and his minion, Faustus still has the ego to think he can outsmart them.

And not only does he stroke his own ego in this way, but also he sees fits to find others to do so as well. He goes on to spend most of his remaining time on earth performing parlor tricks for important political figures, which suggests that his only interest lies in showing off his “talents,” in turn “earning” respect from people whose opinions matter to him. The need to prove oneself, and receive verification from others that one is indeed important, impressive, and/or powerful is a classic case of insecurity. In Faustus’s case, it speaks directly to his need to prove his masculinity, which, as we see in his desperate attempts for attention and verification of his worth, is of the utmost importance to him.

Also worth noting, Faustus needs not only to enhance his masculinity (as in obtaining unlimited power and boosting his ego); he must also defend it against the potential “threats” of femininity. As Golden notes in regard to Faustus’s apparent gender-based insecurity, “Faustus has never truly integrated the feminine element of his psyche with his prideful masculine intellect, never come to terms with what Jung calls the anima or ‘soul-image’” (207). Thus, Faustus feels threatened by the unfamiliar, which also presents a challenge to his masculinity. We see his defensiveness—which, at the risk of forfeiting neutrality, we might deem as unreasonable—in his interaction with the emperor’s knight in Scene 10. Kuriyama notes that Faustus’s insecurities appear in full force when, after the knight ridicules and questions Faustus’s potency and manhood, Faustus retaliates “by horning the Knight, thus representing him as a cuckold and calling his potency into question” (112). Faustus’s answer to the hostile knight shows that he is not only so insecure as to take immediate action to defend his manhood; he must also assert his dominance by challenging and effeminizing the man who questioned his potency. He is so insecure with his masculinity that he must swiftly and cruelly punish anyone who brings into the open what we may speculate to be among his darkest fears—that his manhood may be less than what it should be. As Kuriyama concludes, “when a paternal character respects Faustus’s powers, Faustus respects his; when a paternal character challenges Faustus’s manhood or otherwise poses a threat, Faustus sees to it that he, like the Knight, is ‘met with’ [x.84] or ‘worthily required’ [x.89]” (112). Thus we see in Faustus’s actions that it is not only belittling to his ego to have his manhood called into question;

he seems also to react as if it were a matter of personal honor. That is, he must answer the challenge from a defensive position to confirm the “safety” of his masculinity. Such defensiveness as Faustus exhibits in this scene is yet another strong implication of his insecurity with his male identity.

Like both Faustus and Tamburlaine, “[t]he basic psychological conflict of *Edward II*, as usual, is a conflict over manhood or power” (Kuriyama 190). It is interesting to note that the qualities that define Edward’s masculinity complex are remarkably similar to some of those seen in the aforementioned title characters: egotism, gender insecurity, and hypersensitivity toward feeling respected and authoritative. But still Edward exhibits a far different nature than Tamburlaine or Faustus. Instead of desiring unlimited power, his desire is to hold on to the man he loves (first Gaveston, then Spencer), which results in his losing the ability to maintain the power he believes himself entitled to. His insecurity surrounding his power, heightened by the challenges of his nobles (which shall be elaborated upon further in the next paragraph), he feels he must overcompensate for, a subconscious act which results in flagrant egotism. As Kuriyama says of Edward, “He is not only impotent and headstrong, like a spoiled child, but markedly egocentric” (182). As discussed in the previous sections, egotism is a foundational result of a masculinity complex. Edward’s egotism is apparent in the fact that he believes he should get what he wants, no questions asked, because, being king, he perceives himself as virtually invincible. He believes his word should be law (which, in his defense, is usually the case for a king); but as he follows this belief, we see his ego swell, rising to meet the challenge of subordinate defiance, ultimately resulting in desperate attempts to project his masculinity outwardly to assert his power. Despite the persistent protests from his nobles, he states, definitively marking the position he stubbornly holds throughout the play, “I will have Gaveston” (i.95). Jon Surgal points out that statements like this confirm, “Edward’s romantic attachments are fundamentally narcissistic” (195). Neither the opinions of his nobles, nor the fate of his kingdom matter so much as his own desires because, as Huebert asserts, Edward is “well-bred, confident of his good taste, [and] accustomed to being at the center of things” (214). His egotism culminates in threats and demands which Surgal

believes “reveal an inflated assessment of his own power” (194). His egotistical need to be dominant even goes so far as to bully the Bishop of Coventry, of whom he orders his guards to “throw off his golden mitre” (i.186), “seize upon his goods” (i.192) and take him “to the Tower” (i.197). Edward performs such behavior, in addition to his defiance of the nobles’ requests, in an effort to assert his power and masculinity.

As previously stated, Edward’s egotism appears as a direct result of the hypersensitive insecurity centered around his apparent inability to command respect and affirm his authority. But actually, as Kuriyama puts it, “It would be an understatement to say that Edward is hypersensitive” (202). We see such sensitivity when, as if being challenged of his throne (and in turn his manhood) by his nobles, Edward asks, “Beseems it thee to contradict thy king?” (i.91). Edward’s reaction in this and similar situations seems very unusual for a king who feels confident in his position of authority. When confronted by such insolence and disrespect, it seems reasonable to assume that a king who is secure in his ability to dominate would counter such opposition with firm commands for obedience rather than a meek interrogation. A similar instance occurs later when Edward, confronted again by his nobles, says, “Here, Mortimer, sit thou in Edward’s throne; / Warwick and Lancaster, wear you my crown. / Was ever king thus overruled as I?” (iv.38). Here we see Edward realize the challenge being made to his authority. What’s more, his offer of his crown and throne, while obviously sarcastic, reveals the subtle truth behind his insecurity that the nobles wish to usurp his kingship. The images of the crown and throne symbolize power, dominance and authority, all of which, for a king, are directly related to Edward’s masculine ability to command respect. Kuriyama argues, “the loss of his crown is just as traumatic as an actual mutilation might be to someone else” (203). In perhaps his most insecure moment of the play—conveniently at a time when Mortimer’s minions have arrived to take away his crown—Edward complains, “My nobles rule, I bear the name of king; / I wear the crown but am controlled by them” (xxi.28-29). Unfortunately for Edward, he has admitted that he is not the dominant male of the play. Instead, his nobles are—Mortimer in particular. And as if the inevitable loss of his crown were not emasculating enough, in his final scene,

just before his death, "His beard, the last symbolic remnant of his manhood, is shaved off" (Kuriyama 196).

The evidence of Edward's combination of egotism and insecurity suggests that Edward is aware of his inadequacies and therefore must overcompensate. But Edward does not seem to understand, nor is it overtly stated *why* his nobles (and later his queen, Isabella) show him such disrespect. It is worth considering then, since there is sufficient evidence to support the notion, that Edward's blatant homoerotic relationship with Gaveston (and later Spencer) could be the reason that Edward is not treated like an authoritative, dominant male. Certainly there is enough evidence to show that the nobles and Isabella suspect (or perhaps they are sure of it) a homoerotic love affair between Edward and Gaveston (aside from the fact that he frequently and openly claims to love the man he calls "My Gaveston"). Isabella, for example, laments that Edward "dotes upon the love of Gaveston. / He claps his cheeks and hangs about his neck, / Smiles in his face and whispers in his ears" (ii.50-52); to which Mortimer Senior responds, "Is it not strange that he is thus bewitched?" (ii.55). The queen later confronts Gaveston with the lines, "Is't not enough that thou corrupts my lord / And art a bawd to his affections?" (iv.150-151). Not only do they seem to be aware of the homosexual affair, but also "Edward's detractors . . . consistently assign him the female role in his relationship" (Surgal 177). Naturally, this does not help Edward in his attempts to project his dominance and masculinity. Surgal claims, "Marlowe's Edward is motivated by the traditionally feminine attributes of instinct and emotion, while Marlowe's Gaveston is presented from the outset in the traditionally masculine role of Machiavellian social climber" (177-178).

Appropriately, the same can be said for the relationship later shared between Edward and Spencer. In response to Edward's dissenters, Spencer is portrayed as the dominant male as he challenges Edward's masculinity, saying, "Were I King Edward . . . would I bear . . . These barons thus to beard me in my land? . . . Did you retain your father's magnanimity?" (xi.10-16). Edward, playing the passive, feminine role, submits: "we have been too mild, / Too kind to them" (xi.24-25). And later, Spencer is the one who initiates Edward's decision to take vengeance in battle for Gaveston's

death. He says, "Advance your standard, Edward, in the field, / And march to fire them from their starting holes" (xi.126-127). While this is certainly speculative, it seems as though Edward is simply lacking the testosterone—or at least the high levels of adrenaline in the typical male warrior type—to take charge of a situation. Hence, Spencer takes over the masculine role of the relationship and Edward, as a way to overcompensate for his lack of dominance and authority, follows the more assertive Spencer's advice and plays the role of the brave king leading his soldiers into battle. While Edward goes on to win this battle, he eventually loses the war. Later, in Scene 18, as if suddenly remembering his kingly status, and now aware that he must take charge to prove himself more manly and authoritative than Spencer, Edward overcompensates one final time to ensure his undoing. While Spencer and Baldock insist that they flee for their lives from the queen's army, Edward foolishly attempts to assert his masculinity: "What, was I born to fly and run away, / And leave the Mortimers conquerors behind?" (xviii.4-5). This sudden (insecure) need to assert himself over the obviously more dominant Mortimer ultimately costs him the war, the lives of Spencer and Baldock, and, in addition to the last ounce of masculinity and dignity he has left, his own life. Such destructive results springing from a feminine man's insecurities thus make Kuriyama's conclusive analysis of Edward's character especially worthy of consideration: "Viewed in the light of what we have learned from analysis of Marlowe's other works, Edward seems to be an abstract of all the weak or 'feminine' traits that Marlowe views as most dangerous and undesirable" (189).

Indeed, Marlowe's own insecurities and feelings on masculinity may have prompted his creation of characters like Tamburlaine, Faustus and Edward, each of whom display signs of a masculinity complex. While it may seem from the evidence provided that Marlowe's opinion of men and masculinity was negative, it is worth noting that his female characters are comparatively devoid of depth, which suggests that Marlowe felt more comfortable writing intricate male roles with psychological gender- and ego-driven insecurities. As Martin points out, the dominant male roles—dominant in terms of both character and number—of Marlowe's plays "tend to suggest that really serious political play-

ers can only be men, whose deviation from a rigidly masculine code determines their success or failure" (81). And, as has been examined, this proves to be the case for Tamburlaine, Faustus and Edward. In the end, the fate of each of these characters, or that of the characters that support or oppose them, is determined by how these male figures deal with their own masculine insecurities.

Notes

1. For a better understanding of Martin's assessment, let it be known that, in this case, "masculinist" is to be understood as the characteristics typically associated with men or manhood, and an "assumption" should be interpreted as an act of taking or appropriating power.

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The Arab Orient in Edgar Allan Poe

BY
Zainab Ibrahim

Among his contemporaries, Edgar Allan Poe was unique not only in personality and style, but especially in how elements of the Arab East, as well as influences of Quranic scripture, and Islamic references appeared in many of his short stories and poems. The “otherness” of the Orient intrigued Poe and he sensitively and sympathetically introduced Oriental and Islamic elements into his short stories and poetry bridging the cultural gap between East and West that has always existed. It is important to acknowledge the Oriental aspect of Poe’s writings because it provides a better understanding of his works as well as an appreciation of the Eastern influence that inspired Poe. Poe shows “profound epistemological humility in the face of cultural and religious difference, a stance too often lacking in many of his contemporaries” (Yothers 60). In fact, Western writers have often treated Orientalism as a field that existed “for the West,” exhibiting attitudes “either paternalistic or candidly condescending” (Said 204). They often viewed the East with a critical eye; the “otherness” of Orientalism made it an easy target to demonize. Poe’s attitude towards the East, however, was a more positive one. I propose to investigate two works, the short story “Ligeia,” and the poem “Israfel.” In both works an obvious pattern of Oriental elements will emerge through the characters, surroundings, and subject matter. While the analysis of “Ligeia” will focus more on the Arab Eastern influence in the story, “Israfel” will investigate the Islamic influence in the poem as it is an important aspect of the Oriental East. Both works provide a cultural and religious view that is often uncommon in American Literature.

In order to understand “Orientalism” in Poe’s works, we have to understand that the West traditionally divided the world between us, “West,” and them, “East.” In this scheme the East became the “other,” and advanced the idea that the Orient was unlike the West or in opposition to it. As a matter of fact, Edward Said observed that the Orient itself “is an idea that has a

history and tradition of thought, imager, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West” (Said 5). That would mean that the popular understanding of what an Oriental is or is not is actually based on the West’s perception of it. Said concludes that Orientalism and the Orient do not correspond with the actual “real” Orient which is a Western-made concept, framing a “considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with ‘our’ (Western) world” (Said 12). Inevitably, Poe’s exposure to the Orient was unlikely to have been a true and accurate representation of the Orient. However, Poe differs from some of his contemporaries because his writings did not denounce the East, its culture, and its religion (specifically Islam). Others viewed the East as a “place isolated from the mainstream of European progress, in the sciences, arts, and commerce” (Said 206) and as a place known for its “eccentrics, its backwardness, its, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability, its supine malleability” (Said 206). Other writers such as Marx, Renan, Lane, Sacy, Flaubert, and Nerval “saw the Orient as a locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption” (Said 206), viewing the East in a negative light as an area of the world less fortunate or even as missing a component of Westernism. Poe admired the differences between East and West and sought to establish the unique beauty of the East in many of his works. In regards to this essay the use of the word Oriental is not going to imply the entire east, but instead the Arabic speaking portion of the Middle East and North Africa. Even Said admits in his book *Orientalism* that although the term can be used for the entire East, it is most commonly associated with the Arab world. Unlike contemporaries such as Emerson and Thoreau, Poe himself tended to focus more on the Oriental Arab countries rather than other Oriental cultures.

Poe’s interest in the Orient corresponds to the fact that in the nineteenth century Orientalism “came into vogue in the literary and visual culture of Europe” (Lopez 71). The American people’s interest in the East was spurred by the Barbary Wars that were fought at the turn of the 18th century and 19th century between Arab countries in North Africa and the United States. The propaganda generated by these wars ensured that Americans were

familiarized with the concept of an Oriental Arab. It also sparked an interest in the Arabic culture and its people. Although Poe wrote decades after the Barbary Wars, the exposure was nonetheless there, and American society retained a small lingering perception of the East colored by a basic, although, skewed, perception of it. In “Ligeia” and “Israfel,” the East is portrayed throughout the works in religious and cultural terms. Arab Orientalism contains two important points that will be discussed in detail, the Arabesque and the Islamic. Both are dispersed through the two works by Poe.

Many critics who read “Ligeia” often come to one of two conclusions based on either a literal interpretation or a psychoanalytical one that looks beyond the text. The literal reading would take the narrator’s account as the truth, that Ligeia was in fact a perfect wife and had died only to be reincarnated in the body of the narrator’s second wife Rowena, killing her in the process. The second reading takes into account the mention of opium in the story and considers that the narrator is psychologically unstable as well as in a drug-induced fantasy and so he imagines a woman the epitome of perfection in her style, intellect, looks, and personality. Both interpretations are valid, and it may very well be that Poe himself intended the story to be viewed with both readings in mind. However, critics tend to discount the Oriental implications evident in the story. Reading from an Oriental perspective reveals yet another interesting interpretation of “Ligeia,” one that considers the possibility that the story may be a cultural message about the East and the West, the East represented by Ligeia and the West by Rowena. The critic John C. Gruesser has a similar outlook on “Ligeia” stating that “Poe associates Ligeia and the room not only structurally but, through oriental motifs, thematically as well” (34). The room mentioned is the one Rowena dies in and is considered to be Oriental in appearance and description. The Arabesque nature of the room and its surroundings will be discussed later in connection with the term “Arabesque.”

Gruesser also points out the fact that Ligeia is being described as an “Eastern woman” while Rowena is clearly “Northern European.” The contrast between the two women is clear and they become opposing forces, binary in more than just features. For example, Ligeia’s skin is the “purest ivory,” her hair

“raven-black . . . glossy . . . naturally curling,” her nose that of a “Hebrew” and her eyes “larger than the ordinary eyes of our own race” (61). This description may bring to mind an Oriental Arab woman. The eyes are also reminiscent of the Orientals because of myths concerning the doe-eyed Oriental women. Traditionally large eyes are a sign of beauty in the East, from as early as the Pharaohs who coveted large eyes to the modern day standards of beauty in the Middle East. Even in Islamic religious terms the “Houri” (beautiful creatures in Paradise) is described as “fair” with “lovely wide eyes” (Quran 52:20). The narrator’s comment about Ligeia’s eyes being different from ones in his own “race” is interesting as it points to perhaps a different ancestry, maybe even an Oriental Semitic one, than the narrator’s European one. Perhaps this explains why her family is never named or mentioned save for one comment about how the narrator supposes her family to be from “a remotely ancient date” (60). The “ancient date” of her family echoes back to old Biblical families like Abraham’s. Taking the last part into consideration and acknowledging the long and ‘ancient’ history of certain Oriental Arab countries, it becomes entirely plausible for Ligeia to be an Oriental, or at least a descendent of the Orient.

Rowena, on the other hand, is not only described as white European, but her description is brief and unexciting. She is only mentioned as being “fair-haired” and “blue-eyed.” The fact that her description is so generic compared to Ligeia’s flowing adverbs and praises provides us with a feeling of the narrator’s boredom with Rowena and utter infatuation and obsession with Ligeia. Ligeia is full of life, she is wise and “lofty,” she is “passionate,” “ethereal,” and her love is “idolatrous” (69). An interesting concept with Poe is his use of untraditional descriptions of Ligeia. For example, she is called “ethereal” which according to the OED means “Heavenly, celestial”; that otherworldly aspect of her is yet another indication of her difference from Rowena. Add that with the narrator’s previous recollections of Ligeia’s eyes being larger than any member of his own race and the fact that her beauty is “strange” and we get allusions to her “otherness.” Ligeia fits the identity of “other” well because she is unlike the Western Rowena. Their opposing features and personalities signify the East vs. West. If we approach Orientalism as that

which is not Western, then the Oriental elements in Ligeia that oppose Rowena are enough proof of her “otherness.” As Robert Oscar Lopez explains, “to ‘Orientalize’ someone is to reinforce an exotic or strange view of that person, by associating him or her with perceived values that correspond to the ‘East’ . . . against the rational and normalized ‘West’”(71). The narrator suggests that Rowena is not normal or rational; Ligeia, however, with her exotic beauty and “strangeness,” (62) her “intensity in thought, action, or speech,” “stern passion,” and “fierce energy” is distinctively uncommon and corresponds to Edward Said’s view of the Oriental nineteenth century art “as a figure” for “sensuality, terror, sublimity, idyllic pleasure, [and] intense energy” (118). Clearly the exposure to the “Orient” from popular culture left Poe with enough information to draw a primarily Oriental figure for his story.

Ligeia’s appearance and character are not the only prominent pointers to an Oriental influence in Poe’s works. As a matter of fact, the English Abbey which becomes the final setting for the climatic end to the story has Oriental associations. An essential aspect of Orientalism, one that is usually discussed separately because of its broadness of style, is Arabesque. The Arabesque style is broad because it can be in all forms of art, from music, dance, poetry and visual art to furniture style, yet is narrow because it refers only to the Arab East and Turkey, not the rest of the East. The term “Arabesque” means “in the Arab mode” (Campo 50) or at least refers to the European designation of the Arab mode at the time. As with Orientalism the Arabesque as the West understood it was not the real Arabesque of the East because “Poe’s ‘Arabesque’ is not a product of Arab culture, per se, but rather the product of a European, and German in particular, interpretation of Arab culture” (Berman 130). The term Arabesque was “a Western name for an Eastern image” (Berman 133) whose roots and designs stretch back to 10th century Baghdad. Poe’s interest in the form may have been due to its “geometric motifs” and “stylized writings” (Campo 51). The style’s “geometric formalism (its balance and integration)” (Berman 31) seems appropriate to a writer such as Poe who wanted to separate himself from his American contemporaries. As a result, he employed these Arabesque elements in many of his works, such as “Tamerlane,” “Al-Araaf,” “Tales of

the Arabesque and the Grotesque,” and later ones such as “The Visionary” and “The Fall of the House of Usher.”

In “Ligeia” the scene in the Abbey is of the upmost importance as it contains a wealth of Arabesque elements. The draperies, said to be “gorgeous” and fantastic” (67), can be a part of a traditional Arabesque style of flowered leaf patterns on cloth. That pattern is usually associated with embroidery, intricate details, and lavish cloth. The “ottoman . . . of Eastern figure” (68) is traditionally Turkish furniture in origin, and the Arabesque style of leaves and flowers present on many ottomans is a large part of the Turkish Arabesque heritage. Poe also describes a “huge censer . . . Saracenic in pattern” indicating that the censer (a vessel for burning incense) is also of Arabian design. The term “Saracenic” is an older variant term of the original Arabesque and can be “applied to Islamic architecture in its various forms, or any features of it” (OED). The narrator specifically uses the term “Arabesque” in “Ligeia” to describe the tapestries that cover the walls, the material golden and “spotted all over, at irregular intervals, with arabesque figures” (68). We can infer that the “figures” are either “floral, geometric, or calligraphic” (EI 51) since these are the definitive designs of the Arabesque style. The style of the Abbey links the setting to the Oriental character of Ligeia and reinforces the narrator’s fondness for the Oriental, and especially the Arabic Oriental.

Another aspect of the Orient that Poe respected and admired seems to have been the religion of Islam. Poe was not alone in seeking out the translation of the Quran and a basic understanding of the religion; other writers of the time such as Emerson and even Irving became interested in the Islamic religion, and in fact, Emerson purchased a copy of a translated Quran in London (Einboden 1). Poe’s references to Islamic scripture appear to be specifically from George Sale’s *The Koran: Commonly Called the Alcoran of Mohammed* (Einboden 8). However, Poe often paraphrased and extended verses from the Quran to better fit his vision for his work. For example, in his famous poem “Israfel,” Poe draws from Islamic belief about the angel Israfel who will blow his horn or trumpet that will sound on the last day so that the living may die, and once again he will blow into it to revive all the dead of the world on the Day of Judgment. Although Poe may not have known the details of the angel Israfel and his duty

to Allah, as Israfael is never specifically named in the Quran, Poe appears to have liked a particular phrase from Sale's "Preliminary Discourse" in the Koran describing Israfael as having "the most melodious voice of all God's creatures" (Stovall 213). Poe precedes the poem "Israfael" with the epigraph "And the angel Israfael, whose heart-strings are a lute, and who has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures." It is interesting to be acquainted with the actual passage of the Quran that speaks of Israfael's duty without mentioning his name: "And the Trumpet will be blown, and all who are in the heavens (living entities like angels) and all who are on earth will swoon away . . . Then it will be blown a second time, and behold they will be standing, looking on (on judgment day)" (Q. 39:68).

"Israfael" is in no way an education on the Islamic concept of Israfael and his significance, but rather a focus on the beauty of his voice, status, and the fantastical elements of angels. Although Poe draws from the Quran to write "Israfael" there is little to no truth in what he writes about; it is mostly Poe's imagination at work creating wonderful scenes and enticing imagery. The poem also mentions the "Houris," who have been briefly explained earlier in the paper, as "beautiful black-eyed virgins allotted to those who reach paradise" (Tate 70). Besides the two mentions of Israfael and the Houris, the poem is an embellishment on Islamic subject matters which Poe's imagination and fancy made into a beautifully lyrical poem.

Credit should be given to Poe for crossing not only cultural divides but religious ones as well while still managing to elegantly present his Gothic stories and musical poems. Poe clearly admired the East, and the Orient inspired many of his works. He indulged no degrading comments about Oriental culture or blatant stereotypes about Islam and Arabs. Poe was honestly interested and inspired by the Quran and the Eastern culture, with its Arabesque style. The different cultural elements in his works add a different and unique dimension uncommon to American Literature. He may even be implying "the epistemological inadequacy of any mono-cultural narrative" (Yothers 60) while simultaneously providing us with glimpses into the uniqueness and beauty of the Oriental culture.

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Flesh, Blood, and Woman: Transgression and Transformation in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*

BY

Elizabeth Raborn Wood

In his 1893 essay "The Fantastic Imagination," George MacDonald writes that a "fairytale, like a butterfly or a bee, helps itself on all sides, sips at every . . . flower, and spoils none" (8). This definition highlights the acquisitive mutability of the fairytale as a story form, an element that carries over from the fairytale's folklore roots. According to Stephen Benson, in "Angela Carter and the Literary Marchen: A Review Essay," folklore embodies "a tradition of versions and variants which play off and against one another" (30). While the bones of each tale remain the same, the flesh of the tale varies depending on the time and place of its telling. In her 1979 short story collection *The Bloody Chamber*, Angela Carter revisits the fairytale, and true to the folkloric influence of variance, she offers a sampling of different adaptations of each tale. In this collection Carter offers three versions of Charles Perrault's 1697 story "Little Red Riding Hood," the first literary publication of the current children's classic. Where Perrault's version of the story attempts to eliminate the mutability of the fairytale and give the tale a single, static purpose by attaching a moral addendum which warns girls away from both strange and "obliging" wolves, Carter's disparate re-writings explode the mutability of the story and the female characters within it. In particular, two of Carter's wolf stories, "The Company of Wolves" and "The Werewolf," as well as one re-telling of "Beauty and the Beast," titled "The Tiger's Bride," explore the transgressive and transformative female character on a liminal path. Within Carter's re-tellings the female figure exerts her will, thereby re-orienting the power of transformation within her own body.

Charles Perrault's "Little Red Riding Hood" and The Brothers Grimm's "Little Red Cap" subject the young female to patriarchal constraints. In Perrault's "Little Red Riding Hood," the girl, "not

knowing that it was dangerous to stop and listen to a wolf," is diverted from the "shorter road" to her grandmother's house. She travels the "longer road," distracted by butterflies and flowers, and because she dallies, the wolf eats grandmother. When the girl arrives, he "gobbled her up," as well (Tatar 12, 13). Perrault carefully includes a clear warning for young girls as an adjunct. In it he advises that "young girls . . . are wrong to listen to just anyone," and also that the "tame wolves" who might be found following young ladies . . . into their chambers . . . [a]re the most dangerous of all" (13). Perrault's advice offers instruction on maintaining chastity through segregation, and the wolf appears and diverts the girl from the safe path between mother and grandmother and back again, transgressing the sanctity of that segregation. The path, a potentially liminal space for exploration, becomes confining, intended to contain the girl in her state of innocence. "In Little Red Cap," the Brothers Grimm version of the same story, the necessity for adherence to the path is more directly addressed. Little Red Cap's mother tells her "when you're out in the woods, walk properly and don't stray from the path" (14). Benson describes the encoding of these moral lessons of obedience and chastity into the story as the "deliberate attempts of literary tellers and collectors to fix authoritative texts" (46). They reflect the presentation of a single, clearly defined path for the "good" girl to follow. Therefore, by offering multiple versions of each story, with each version diverging drastically from the others, Carter not only counters that single, authoritative voice of direction, but she does so without replacing it, as Kimberly Lau notes "with a feminist version, a different authority." Instead, with her diverse retellings, Carter "implies an infinite chain of infidelities, beginning with infidelities to her own tales," and thereby opening up copious possibilities for the female figure on the liminal path (78, 79).

One aspect of those possibilities relates to the girl's interaction with the grandmother figure in Carter's wolf stories. In *Negotiating With the Dead: A Writer on Writing*, Margaret Atwood states that "all writing of the narrative kind . . . is motivated, deep down, by a fear of and a fascination with mortality—by a desire to make the risky trip to the Underworld and bring something back from the dead" (156). In "The Story of Grandmother," published by Paul Delarue in 1885, the little girl consumes the flesh and blood

of her murdered grandmother after the wolf tells her it is meat and wine. Grandmother's cat observes the girl's consumption, and despite the cat's admonishment that she is a "slut if [she] eat[s] the flesh and drink the blood of granny," the girl still divests herself of clothing at the wolf's request, and shares his bed, at least long enough to take notice of the wolf's overpowering physical traits (10). The little girl devises a plan to unbind herself from the wolf and escape only after her communion with grandmother through consumption and the physical bed activity with the wolf. This fact indicates that her lost innocence in conjunction with the consumption of her female ancestor, and metaphorically her wisdom, operate together to empower the girl/woman. In "The Werewolf," Carter probes the consumption of the old to make room for the young by way of sexual violence. In this story, however, it is not the girl facing the threat of victimization and rape. Instead, armed with her father's knife and her culture's superstitions about witches, the girl sets out in "Winter and cold weather" for grandmother's house (109). Along the way, she encounters a wolf and quickly "slashed off its right paw" (109). The girl's use of a knife to commit bloody violence on another mimics the act of deflowering as the insertion of the blade into the body of the wolf imitates the sex act and draws blood in the process. This action inverts the girl/wolf binary, and a physical transformation is effected on the wolf's body.

In addition to that inversion, the girl in Carter's story also draws on the cultural folklore involving superstitions about witches. Arriving at grandmother's house, the girl discovers that the wolf paw she collected has transformed into her grandmother's hand. She strips the shrouding sheet from her grandmother's body, divesting her of material protection in the same way the earlier story divested the girl at the wolf's behest. The girl calls on the neighbors and accuses her grandmother of witchcraft. The neighbors respond, driving the "old woman . . . out into the snow . . . beating her old carcass . . . until she fell down dead" (110). In this way, the girl assumes ownership of the 'wisdom,' in the form of her grandmother's generation's superstitious beliefs in order to divest her grandmother of her body, as well as of her locus of operation. The girl in Carter's tale is not empowered by a transformation thrust on her from an outside force in the form

of the male/wolf figure; instead, she purposely enacts her own transformation from girl to woman by usurping her grandmother's existence, ostensibly with the excuse that her grandmother violates local social strictures against witchcraft. However, the story questions even that assertion. Snow falling "so thickly that the path and any footsteps, track or spoor that might have been upon it were obscured," erases the girl's initial encounter with the wolf and leaves the reader uncertain of whether the encounter ever occurred (109). The ambiguous reliability of Carter's girl figure and her narrative, coupled with her willful action, erase any trace of passive innocence that might be associated with the Little Red Riding Hood figure. In this incarnation she becomes a transgressive actor, an aggressor that uses the path to further her own development, as opposed to keeping to a path prescribed for her by others.

In "The Werewolf," Carter's girl figure violates her grandmother's body and contrives her own transformation by acting as a predator. Simone de Beauvoir, discussing female eroticism in *The Second Sex*, states "that instead of integrating the powerful drives of the species into her individual life, the female is the prey of the species, the interests of which are dissociated from the female's interests as an individual" (372). Desire, in this composition, is something directed at the female in order to govern her actions and behavior. Her interests are not the interests of the social order, and therefore must be subsumed within the interests of society. By granting the girl an active outlet for her desires in her tale, Carter exhibits the female as predator instead of prey, albeit preying on another female figure, the grandmother. However, closer examination of the superstitions presented in the story reveal the manner in which women already prey on one another within the male dominated social structure. The narrator portrays "a witch" as "some old woman whose cheeses ripen when her neighbors' do not" (108). This depiction illuminates the role that women play on perpetrating social subjection on other women through accusations of transgression. This configuration enacts predation only indirectly, through insinuation and accusation that reinforces the social constraints they operate under. The girl accuses her grandmother of extreme transgression and turns the existing social structure against her. In this way the girl eliminates

the grandmother as a potential representation of the established order. This simultaneously undermines and reinforces the existing paradigm. When the girl assumes her grandmother's place, she does so along with the connotations of the witch that she herself imposed on that place. She dons the mantle of grandmother as witch and independent place simultaneously, and like the witch from the superstitions, "she prospered" (110). While the girl in Carter's story does not rupture the existing constraints, she does corrupt them by appropriating the right to act directly in response to her desires and by dropping her "scabby coat of sheepskin" to reveal her predatory nature. Carter celebrates the female capacity for action, even, or perhaps especially, if those and actions and their subsequent outcomes fail to reinforce either a feminist or a traditionalist perspective.

Both of these perspectives acknowledge the mutability and transformative possibilities of the female body. Examining the traditionalist perspective, DeBeauvoir asserts that "since patriarchal times only evil powers have been attributed to the feminine flow, Pliny said that a menstruating woman ruins crops, destroys gardens, kills bees, and so on" (149). Although evil intent is apparent in these beliefs, they also reflect the frightening power for transformation that the dominant male paradigm associates with the post-pubescent woman. DeBeauvoir points out that "The little girl, not yet in puberty, carries no menace, she is under no taboo and has no sacred character;" she lacks, in her virginity, the power to transform (149). In the Perrault and Grimm versions of the Little Red Riding Hood story, each of the narratives design adherence to the path as a controlled space between two female spheres to confine the female figure within that non-threatening virginal existence. In Grimm's "Little Red Cap," while the mother provides the admonition to "walk properly and don't stray from the path," it clearly operates to keep the girl from straying into the male world and thereby into adulthood (14).

In "The Company of Wolves," Carter investigates the magical carnality of transgression and transformation, located within the body of the girl who strays from the path with a clearly sexual goal in mind. Carter describes the girl as moving "within the invisible pentacle of her own virginity . . . unbroken eggs . . . a sealed vessel" who "has inside her a magic space" (114). The girl's

virginity contains her, while she carries the potential for magic within her body. In the story this potential manifests itself when the girl confronts the wolf in her grandmother's house. She asserts, laughing, that she is "nobody's meat" and then divests herself of clothing and stands "dazzling, naked" (118). Then she acts on the wolf's body as well, divesting him of his clothes, which in this tale operate to grant him the semblance of humanity. The girl embraces his inhuman nature, joining him in "a savage marriage ceremony," which alters him from predator to "tender wolf" (118). The transformation from child to woman, that DeBeauvoir depicts as "an act of violence . . . an abrupt rupture with the past, the beginning of a new cycle," thus embraced, works to transform, not just the girl, but the wolf as well (372). Through this process he becomes less dangerous, while she becomes more so, viewing him as "tender," which carries the double meaning of gentle behavior juxtaposed against the idea of delectable meat to be consumed (118). While these transformations take place within the act of consummation, the girl chooses to ignore her grandmother's "old bones under the bed [that] set up a terrible clattering" in an attempt to terminate the granddaughter's transgression across the boundaries between virgin and woman, as well as the ones between predator and prey (118). The granddaughter sheds the grandmother's restrictions and assumes control of her own sexual identity.

Juxtaposing the two female figures in "The Story of Grandmother" and "The Company of Wolves" provides insight into the ways that influential older women can either perpetuate or aid in the subversion of patriarchal social paradigms. In "The Story of Grandmother," the girl gains power to escape the wolf's domination by consuming her grandmother's flesh, thereby continuing grandmother's existence past the boundaries of death and benefiting from that communion with death. Conversely, Carter's girl, in "The Company of Wolves," ignores her grandmother's attempt to communicate from the dead. This presents the possibility that the 'wisdom' of grandmothers may just as often operate to perpetuate restrictions on women as offer any form of empowerment. By ignoring the grandmother's warning bones, the girl more fully realizes her potential for transformation, both of the self and of those around her, in addition to taking control of her own sexuality. Carter defines the wolf as "Carnivore incarnate"

(118). He embodies the abstract concept of a predatory consumer of flesh embodied, given flesh. In this way, he exists as a paradox, the consumer at risk of being consumed. Carter describes the room during their confrontation and consummation as “full of the clamour of the forest’s Liebestod” (118). Liebestod, the consummation of love in death, illuminates the finality of the transformation each of them undergoes. The girl who crosses the boundary from innocence into sexual awareness, from the role of prey to one of predator, takes a step as final as crossing from life into death. The self that began on the path to grandmother’s can never exist again. Similarly, when she acts to alter the wolf’s predator self, she locates him in the role of fleshed prey. This is a fundamental and irreversible change. However, the grandmother’s rattling bones indicate that those former selves will continue to inform and communicate from the dead, and that communication lends an ephemeral quality to their current incarnations.

In *Negotiating with the Dead*, Margaret Atwood addresses the ephemeral nature of existence and the connection that ephemerality has with the drive to write. Atwood states that because writing has an “apparent permanence” in that “it survives its own performance,” it functions as a peculiar response to the fear of death “coupled with the urge to indite” (158). Carter’s stories express the juxtaposition of fear and the desire to write oneself into existence through the female figures’ efforts to direct their own lives, and to transform themselves as well as those around them accordingly. “The Tiger’s Bride,” Carter’s re-telling of “Beauty and the Beast,” begins with the same exchange of female flesh by two dominant male characters. However, the narrator of “The Tiger’s Bride” exhibits the capacity for self-directed transformation, despite beginning the tale as a commercial object “lost . . . to the Beast at cards” (51). The beast, who “wears a mask with a man’s face painted most beautifully on it,” attempts to operate, at least peripherally, within the confines of the existing social structure that grants access to female flesh in a commercial exchange. The narrator discovers that the beast’s “sole desire is to see the pretty young lady unclothed nude without her dress,” in exchange for which “she will be returned to her father undamaged with bankers’ orders for the sum which he lost to my master at cards and also a number of fine presents such as furs, jewels and horses”

(58). Although this offer appears to leave the narrator physically inviolate, it still reflects the exchange of flesh for cash that governs the lives of women in a patriarchal system.

The narrator effects the first transformation in the power structure between them by magnifying the relationship between flesh and finance. She counters his offer with one of her own; "I will pull my skirt up to my waist, ready for you. But there must be a sheet over my face to hide it" (59). In this way she impersonalizes herself and elevates the objectification such an exchange entails. She also insists that a monetary exchange for access to her flesh must be "only the same amount of money you would give to any other woman in such circumstances (59). Where the beast masks himself to simulate humanity, the narrator's proposed masking would remove the remaining vestiges of her humanity and render her fully into an object. By extending the financial flesh exchange to the extreme of complete removal of her own humanity, the narrator heightens the beast's awareness of the ramifications of the deal he proposes. When "after a baker's dozen heartbeats, one single tear swelled, glittering, at the corner of the masked eye," she exults to have created "shame" in the beast (59). Prior to this point, her father and then the beast hold complete power over her. Exposing the dehumanizing effects of the financial flesh exchange in a way that shames the beast shifts the power in her favor, and transforms her position in relation to the beast.

Although she invokes this power shift, she acknowledges that she still operates, at least in her own mind, under the strictures of her father's world in which one asserts their own humanity by dehumanizing others. The beast, despite his human mask, "lives under a different logic" than she had experienced with her father (63). Thus far, in her patriarch-governed existence, she has "been allotted only the same kind of imitative life that the doll-maker had given" to the mechanical handmaiden provided to her in the beast's house (63). When presented with the mechanical handmaiden, the narrator notices that "there is a musical box where her heart should be," and the valet, also an animal masked in human attire, comments that "Nothing human lives here" (59). By aligning herself with the automaton, she acknowledges that as an objectified female she also lacks humanity. In wishing to view her flesh in exchange for financial rewards, the beast does

not possess the power to divest her of a humanity that she does not exhibit when she arrives. Therefore, the transformative shift in power between them which begins when she exaggerates the financial flesh exchange in the beast's initial offer shifts both her own perspective, as well as the beast's awareness. As a result of this shift, the beast chooses to breach the barrier between his role as dominant male and hers as objectified female by offering his flesh to her view. Dispossessed of his man-mask, the beast exposes his true self to her, and as she recognizes that "Nothing about him reminded [her] of humanity" she undergoes another element of transformation: she relates that she "felt [her] breast ripped apart as if [she] suffered a marvelous wound" (64). This emotional reaction simulates both the act of sex for a virginal female, as well as the birthing process. In each case a physical breach that mimics wounding, including blood loss, occurs and the female undergoes a metamorphosis of status. For the virgin, the initial sexual encounter alters her from child to woman; giving birth alters the female from woman to mother. As a result, the narrator shifts from object to subject.

She furthers this transformation when the beast provides her the opportunity to return to her father, with their wealth restored. She sees her father through the mirror of her mechanical maid and decides that she will not return. Instead she chooses to "dress [the automaton] in [her] own clothes, wind her up, send her back to perform the part of [her] father's daughter" (65). The beast's valet characterizes the mechanical maid as a "simulacra," and remarks that having surrounded themselves with simulacrum instead of living beings they "find it no less convenient than do most gentlemen" (60). Her belief that the simulacra can pass unnoticed as a living girl in her father's patriarchal world, coupled with the valet's commentary concerning gentlemen further supports the idea that she exists, but does not truly live, in that world. By replacing herself in that existence with the simulacra, the narrator gains the ability to remove herself entirely from her father's domain and joins the beast in the "different logic" in which he operates (63). After sending the doll to replace her, the narrator joins the beast in his chamber. He begins to lick her, "And each stroke of his tongue ripped off skin after successive skin, all the skins of a life in the world, and left behind a nascent patina of

shining hairs" (67). This transformation, like the transformations of women in the world she left behind, is painful and emergent. However, it also allows her to completely leave the former world behind and be reborn into "beautiful fur" and a life divorced from the restrictions of human social constructs (67). Abandoning a humanity defined by her dehumanization and objectification by men allows her to assume the power to control her own existence

Carter's re-tellings offer alternative views of female existence and opportunity. The female characters undergo transformations and enact transformations on those around them. In each of the stories examined here the changes seen often result from the character's willful transgression of socially prescribed roles and paths, as well as rebellion against the admonition to be a "good" girl. Carter's female figures appropriate the violence and blood of transformation to their own ends. In some cases they subvert or entirely escape the social constructs surrounding them, while in others, they reinforce those constructs for their personal gain. However, in each of these stories, it is the act of conscious choice that rewrites the female existence and re-orientes the power over and mutability of their lives into their own bodies.

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Gender Role Enactment and Societal Convention in *Other Voices, Other Rooms*

BY

Roberta Markevitch

Truman Capote's groundbreaking novel *Other Voices, Other Rooms* presents a strangely surrealistic world wherein 1940s Mississippi is transformed into a sort of mirror image of reality, one where the surface appearances of gender, sexuality and family identity seem inverted from conventional expectations. Written in 1948, *Other Voices, Other Rooms* was considered alternately shocking and fascinating by critics and audiences for its portrayals of homosexuality, overtly effeminate male characters and, in the protagonist of Joel Knox, the upending of the traditional adolescent boy's coming-of-age story. As one of the first catalysts for action being the death of Joel's mother and his complicated search for a father figure/mother figure replacement, many critics have described the work as Oedipal in nature (Mengeling 100). This assessment is borne out as Joel's development progresses from a confused adolescent to a confident gay man in tandem with his acceptance of Randolph as a pansexual symbol of both mother and lover. Certainly the novel is populated by individuals whose motivations, actions and speech exemplify characteristics of the opposite gender to the extent that this gender role enactment becomes, in ways both overt and subtle, the normative state of affairs. That Capote presents this paradigm as convention, woven into the fabric of the characters' everyday lives, informs the reader's perception of Joel who, though he is discovering his homosexuality, is essentially performing within "normal" gender expectations and therefore stands out as different.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the clearly delineated lines of what constituted normative gender behavior pervaded all aspects of society and personal life: "a binarized identity that was full of implications, however confusing, for even the ostensibly least sexual aspects of personal existence" (Sedgwick 2), which created a framework that all members of society were expected

to perform within. If, however, everyone is enacting the opposite gender role, but these characters are ostensibly heterosexual (with the notable exception of cousin Randolph, who I will argue could actually be read as a female-identified character) and Joel is the sole character performing a conventional gender role but is homosexual, what is Capote trying to say about traditional notions of normalcy?

As the novel begins, Joel Knox is in the midst of the physically and emotionally trying journey from New Orleans to the remote Skully's Landing to meet his father. He gets a lift from Sam Radclif, the rural mail carrier who almost immediately chastises him and then mentions undressing him. When Radclif realizes that Joel Knox's father is Edward Sansom, he admonishes him over allowing his mother to change his name to Knox and says to Joel that if he was his "Pa" he'd "take down your britches and muss you up a bit" (8). The apparent meaning being that Joel deserves to be punished for something he had no control over as a young boy; the collateral meaning of "muss up" being unclear. Though the character of Radclif is described as very masculine, "a big, balding six-footer with a rough, manly face" (6), his odd statement about disrobing Joel seems to belie something more. Further, Radclif's behavior serves as a starting point in the text for one of the key themes of Joel's search for his father and the "parallelism of his struggle to grow out of the dream-world of childhood and to enter the real world of manhood" (Aldridge 40). While serving as the personification of the manly traits that Joel is hoping to find in his father, Radclif also demonstrates the subtle homosexual attributes that, along with opposite-gendered behavior, are found in all of the other major characters.

Later, as the two are riding to Noon City in Radclif's mail truck, Joel inquires about the residents of Skully's Landing and Radclif has an odd demeanor when he talks about cousin Randolph: "And the cousin...yes, by God, the cousin!" (12). When Joel tries to discern meaning from Radclif's reaction, "Radclif merely smiled a curious smile, as if amused by a private joke, too secret for sharing" (12). As the character of cousin Randolph is later revealed to be a cross-dressing homosexual, in hindsight this reaction by Radclif alludes to the possibility of the nature of this particular private joke being between the two of them. The

gothic, small-town claustrophobia that pervades *Other Voices, Other Rooms* lends itself to the feeling of this possibility between men like Randolph and Radclif, “the use of southern gothic themes is equally as satirical as the mock-maleness of the redneck southern inhabitants” (Mitchell-Peters 108). Capote describes the oppressive boredom of rural Louisiana in desperate and intensely vivid details which creates for the reader a sense of excuse for any number of anomalous behaviors. A “manly” man like Radcliff could be exempted from blame by polite society for associating with someone like Randolph in this environment.

The next several characters encountered by Joel upon arrival in Noon City all exhibit various grotesque physical traits as well as opposite gender role enactment in various ways. Joel first meets a one-armed barber, an amusing image and a symbol of ineffectualness. The barber offers Joel money to “collar” “that nasty young’un” (15) in reference to Idabel Thompkins, a rough tomboy who is harassing him from the street. Idabel is one of the overt enactors of the opposite gender in *Other Voices, Other Rooms* and as such is the recipient of much of the other character’s ire throughout the book. Her masculine traits make her a type of freak, which “explicitly links her with other sexually ambiguous figures in the text” (Fahy121). As the other character’s enactment of the opposite gender is much more subtle, Idabel’s unapologetically masculine demeanor holds a mirror up to those other characters, unsettling their existing state of affairs and thus garnering their dislike. The barber’s helplessness in the face of Idabel’s behavior renders his position weaker and subordinate to hers. She also serves as an important metaphor for Joel and an explicit example of defiant gender role subversion. Many favorable critics of *Other Voices, Other Rooms* such as Brian Mitchell-Peters note that “one of Capote’s greatest accomplishment is the insubordination of gender and the expression of personal and sexual discovery for both Joel and Idabel” (Mitchell-Peters 117).

As Joel seeks a cold drink, he enters an establishment called “R.V. Lacey’s Princely Palace,” and is greeted by Roberta V. Lacey, the female proprietor who is also the “prince” of the palace. She is described as having a booming voice, being a “muscular woman” and having “long, ape-like arms that were covered with dark fuzz” (16) as well as hair on her chin. Amidst the clutter of the palace

there are pictures of “toothy bathing beauties” (16) which bring to mind the stereotypical types of decorations one might expect to find in traditionally male environments. When Idabel first speaks to Joel in the Princely Palace, her voice is “boy husky” and Roberta Lacey admonishes her to “put on some decent female clothes” (18), which is ironic because Idabel thus far seems the most “decent” of all the secondary characters in the overtly manifest honesty of just being herself. Frustrated and angry, Idabel is a sympathetic character, an emotion Capote no doubt intended to solicit given the various ways in which she is misunderstood. William White Tison Pugh explains “Capote directs the reader’s response, ordering the audience to be ‘touched’ by Idabel’s plight, to understand the pain which gender codes have placed upon her” (Pugh 670).

The arrival by night at Skully’s Landing has a sort of fever-dream quality to it; Joel has little awareness of the house itself and no firm grasp of where he is or whom he has met with until the next afternoon when he awakens to find his stepmother, Amy Skully, in his room. That she is chasing a blue jay around inside the room seems strange, until Joel notices the already stuffed blue jay on the mantle. Her “mustache” (28), use of a fireplace poker to violently pin the bird to a chair and her position as caretaker of her husband show her to be not only forced into a traditionally masculine role but also physically appearing somewhat masculine as well as prone to traditionally masculine behavior with regards to the bird. Irving Malin discusses the idea of being trapped, just as the bird in Joel’s room, and the enclosed room itself as being a key theme of the gothic structure. “He identifies the three images of American gothic as the room, the voyage and the mirror and the three appropriate themes as confinement, flight—really two sides of the same coin—and narcissism” (qtd. in Douglas 154). Joel is not yet aware of his father’s physical condition and still imagines him as the model of virile, heterosexual manhood. Also, he still has not encountered Randolph, ironically the only able-bodied “man” residing at the Landing.

Amy Skully directs him to the kitchen where he meets Zoo, Jesus Fever’s granddaughter and the Landing’s cook. The first thing she says is in response to Miss Amy: “ain’t I gotta chop the wood?” (32), which indicates immediately that she is a strong woman, capable of performing hard labor and therefore shares

at least one characteristic with men. This is confirmed when she is then described as “tall, powerful, barefoot, graceful” and then “mannishly straddling a chair at the table” (33). Her role as performer of labor as well as the traditional female jobs of domestic and caretaker for her ancient grandfather cast her in both gender roles. The idea being that a caretaker could be a motherly figure or, as sole provider, a fatherly figure. Jesus Fever’s fragility and age make him dependent on his daughter Zoo for care, dependency not being a specifically feminine characteristic, but certainly making him vulnerable. Zoo functions as one of the indicators of difference between the various characters and Joel, such as when her extraordinarily long neck makes her seem “almost a freak, a human giraffe” (33). Thomas Fahy discusses the character’s physical differences in *Other Voices, Other Rooms* and how these anomalies set them apart from Joel by noting that “the bodies of almost every character are marked or deformed in some way—with one notable exception, Joel” (Fahy 122). The freakish component in *Other Voices, Other Rooms* has been noted as a marker of the variety of differences in the world that Capote creates; the bizarre being the convention throughout makes for an atmosphere where “the gothic-type setting is not life threatening—but-freakish—and the queer character is not abnormal or deviant, but a standard part of such an environment” (Mitchell-Peters 123).

Besides Idabel, the other overt enactor of the opposite gender role in *Other Voices, Other Rooms* is cousin Randolph. When Joel walks out into the yard after his breakfast with Zoo, he looks up at the house wondering which window belonged to Randolph, whom he still has not met. “It was at this point that he saw the queer lady. Her suffused marshmallow features brought to mind his own vaporish reflection in the wavy chamber mirror” (40). Neither Joel nor the reader is aware at this point that this “queer lady” is actually Randolph dressed in drag. Later, when it becomes apparent that Randolph is the strange figure in the window, “it is a source of both dramatic irony and suspense for the reader, who sees meaning and intent of which thirteen-year-old Joel on the verge of puberty has no comprehension” (Garson 18). Randolph is described as very obviously feminine, and Capote includes a wealth of details that establishes this image: “curly, very blond, his hair fell in childish yellow ringlets across his forehead, and his

wide-set, womanly eyes were like sky-blue marbles" (46) as well as his wearing of a "Kimono with butterfly sleeves," his "toenails had a manicured gloss," a "hairless face" and his wearing of a "woman's ring" (50). Because Randolph is so overtly feminine and is homosexual (as the reader suspects and has confirmed later in the text), as well as a cross-dresser, it seems Capote intends for him to be read more as a female figure than just a feminine man. Gary Richards notes that "Randolph himself is as delicate as *Gone With the Wind's* dithering Pittypat and other parodic stereotypes of southern femininity" (Richards 36). Throughout the book, Randolph demonstrates no traditionally masculine attributes whatsoever and Capote extensive descriptions of his feminine characteristics successfully make the reader almost forget that Randolph actually is a physical man. The image of Randolph's smooth, androgynous features is also contrasted against those of his deceased mother, Angela Lee, who Zoo says a "mighty peculiar thing happened" to "just before she die: she grew a beard" (70) so that Capote shows that even in absentia, characters still have other-gendered attributes.

When Joel is finally allowed to meet his father, he is shocked to find that the masculine father-figure he has been fantasizing about is confined to his bed, paralyzed and "absolutely helpless" (69). Mr. Sansom, the reader later learns, was accidentally shot by Randolph in a drunken rage over a man named Pepe Alvarez, whom Randolph and his former wife Delores both had an affair with. Joel's psychological reaction is to literally reject his father's existence as "Sansom had already failed as a father, abandoning Joel and his mother some thirteen years earlier, and now he fails as a model for masculinity" (Fahy 123). This rejection of his father is the last barrier to his acceptance of Randolph and homosexuality as a viable substitute; the delusion that Joel has fostered of traditional masculinity is finally and permanently shattered as he now realizes his last hope for this idealized figure is not to be. That Capote presents this as a natural progression in Joel's journey fits the pattern created thus far; setting him apart as the sole enactor of specific male gender behavior. Throughout the work to this point, "each male character (that is) struggling to negotiate desire for another man repeatedly—and almost exclusively—displays gender performances deemed socially appropriate for women" (Richards

32). Though Joel is awakening to his own homosexuality, his interactions with Randolph, Idabel and Zoo have seemed exceedingly “normal” with regard to how one might expect an adolescent boy to navigate such circumstances. Brian Mitchell-Peters summarizes Joel’s experience in *Other Voices, Other Rooms*: “Capote’s text thus marks the first modern representation of homosexuality where a character’s queerness does not lead down some version of the river Styx to a contemporary Hell” (Mitchell-Peters 108).

The close interplay between the seemingly very different characters throughout the text creates a gothic continuity that serves to illustrate their sameness to each other and their contrasts with Joel. Some critics such as John Aldridge have read these characters as metaphors for each other, such as “Idabel, Zoo and Miss Wisteria (as) metaphors for Joel; Jesus Fever and Little Sunshine for Randolph and Miss Amy; Jesus Fever and Idabel’s father for Mr. Sansom” (Aldridge 47); however, these metaphorical allusions seem the truest when describing characters other than Joel. Because Idabel is depicted throughout as most certainly a lesbian, an impression which is confirmed later in the novel through her relationship with Miss Wisteria, and Joel is a developing gay man, they have a core component in common, but their behavior is manifest in very different ways. Idabel wishes to actually *be* a boy, and her behavior throughout the text verifies this repeatedly. She is “a girl who scorns everything that seems feminine, weak, or soft. Hating her own sex, she refuses to be considered a girl” (Garson 22), whereas Joel is clearly and gender-appropriately masculine.

The world that Capote created with *Other Voices, Other Rooms* while gothic and grotesque in many ways, presents a backdrop and supporting cast of characters that demonstrate the viability and integrated normalcy of the many ways in which opposite gender role enactment transpired in 1940s society. By concluding the novel with Joel’s successful acceptance of his sexuality (“I am me,’ Joel whooped. ‘I am Joel, we are the same people.’”) (125) Capote provides affirmation of his transformation, while still employing the technique of bizarre gothic atmosphere and Joel’s differentiation from the other characters that includes “a description of delirium as whirlpool, with Joel in his coffin at the center of a ring of grotesques—which includes every character in the novel but Joel” (Perry 157). The overall effect is a powerful

statement about the values of “normal” society and what it means to be a gay youth, functioning simultaneously within and outside of those standards.

Notes

1. See Aldridge and also Trimmier, who comments on Aldridge’s review being the only serious consideration given to *Other Voices, Other Rooms* until 1958. Trimmier also notes that the book was frequently denounced by its early reviewers as limited in scope, remote from life and of “shocking and grotesque” content.

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Out of the Kitchen and Into Action: Shakespeare's Early Ideas of Feminism in *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Othello*, and *The Merchant of Venice*

BY
Jeannette Williams

In the Elizabethan era, Shakespeare's plays constituted a form of popular entertainment that spanned all classes. Unique in his employment of language, but also in his creation of characters, Shakespeare creates every possible personality from the most disgusting, self-serving, and evil individual, to the most dignified, noble, and intelligent. He plays with ideas of class, royalty, and race—and also toys with gender roles. Shakespeare, one of the first playwrights placing female characters as agents of their actions, positions young women as controversial figures. Through examining *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Othello*, and *The Merchant of Venice*, the primary female characters demonstrate inventiveness, power, and success accomplishing their goals. He creates female characters who, rather than revel in docility and submissiveness, demonstrate instead power, aggression, intelligence, and strength. They manipulate the social order. Second wave feminists, especially Kate Millet, frame the social constructs and ideology that have traditionally kept women in the domestic sphere. Shakespeare removes these women from the domestic sphere and traditionally feminine personality expectations and creates in them dynamic personas outside of the roles of wife and mother. Shakespeare experiments with early ideas of feminism before there was a word to describe it, foregrounded through Kate, Beatrice, Desdemona, and Portia, women removed from the domestic sphere due to unique familial and marital circumstances. He demonstrates their power through a combination of intelligence and their masculine characteristics utilized effectively when removed from the domestic sphere, making them active participants in their own destinies.

Kate, in Shakespeare's comedy *The Taming of the Shrew*, presents herself as a difficult and obstinate woman because her personality is more traditionally masculine. Kate expresses aggression both verbally and physically. When Hortensio criticizes her for not being gentler, she responds, "Iwis it is not halfway to her heart, / But if it were, doubt not her care should be / to comb your noodle with a three legged stool..." (1.1.62-65). Kate has no qualms expressing her feelings without docility or gentleness. She straightway threatens violence on Hortensio, displaying her aggressive side. Social conventions dictate that her aggressive, masculine personality needs to be tamed. Male-dominated, Elizabethan society, however, glorifies aggressive personality traits in men. This paradox manifests itself most successfully in Petruchio, whom society does *not* think needs to be tamed. Petruchio brags about his conquests and aggressive nature, and society rewards him for it. He exclaims, "Have I not in a pitched battle heard / Loud 'larums, neighing steeds, and trumpets clang? / And do you tell me of a woman's tongue, / That gives not half so great a blow to hear / As will a chestnut in a farmer's fire?" (1.2.200-204). Petruchio brags about his aggressive nature, and his society embraces him because it is a characteristic gendered as male. In her book, *Sexual Politics*, Kate Millet argues that the phenomena of one personality trait glorified in men, the same trait, vilified in women, serves the dominant group (men), and emerges from society's construction of gender identity. Millet argues, "The first item, temperament, involved the formation of human personality along stereotyped lines of sex category ('masculine and 'feminine') based on the needs and values of the dominant group and dictated by what its members cherish in themselves and find convenient in subordinates: aggression, intelligence, force, and efficacy in the male; passivity, ignorance, docility, 'virtue,' and ineffectuality in the female" (26). In order to effectively control the subordinate group, dominant patriarchs encourage and reward easily controlled personalities, while they frequently punish personalities which lean more toward aggression and intelligence. Petruchio starves Kate, deprives her of sleep, and keeps her away from her family in order to change her personality to society's version of a more feminine nature.

At first inherently sexist, the title *The Taming of the Shrew* is not as it seems. Kate experiences social isolation, with the excep-

tion of her father, whose interaction holds little value—and a sister who consistently lies and therefore constitutes no sincere relationship. Petruchio offers her something sincere, and compliments her intelligence with his own. Without Petruchio's own intelligence, he would have no success with Kate, as she does not tolerate anyone less intelligent than she. His type of wooing both acknowledges Kate's intelligence and individuality, and his success through non-violent means also shows another aspect of feminism by discouraging domestic violence that was prevalent at the time. He uses violence to manage his servants, but does not use violence to subdue his wife. Instead of implementing force, he demonstrates how to control one's image and counters all her negativity with positivity. When she insists on continually insulting him, he continually compliments her. He says, "For thou art pleasant, gamesome, passing courteous..." (2.1.238). In this way he uses his intelligence to subdue her instead of violence, making it a game of wit that she can participate in. In *What Are Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse?* Michele Bograd discusses just how common domestic violence is and has been. She states that "[a]lthough there are many ways that men as a group maintain women in oppressed positions, violence is the most overt and effective means of social control" (Bograd 197). Despite the fact that domestic violence serves a convenient means of domestic control, Petruchio does not use it on Kate. Instead, he chooses a method of wooing that acknowledges her intelligence and individuality. Though he behaves in an acceptable manner while in public, Petruchio acts foolish, violent, and offensive while in Kate's presence in the hope of showing her how the public perceives her. Kate sees Petruchio's results and quickly employs the trick herself. This shows Kate, not downtrodden, beaten, or tamed, but an intelligent, active *participant* in the identity construction games she and Petruchio play. She possesses the ability to operate on Petruchio's level. Kate's quick transformation shows how society constructs gender identity, opposing the belief that gendered personalities are innate. Monique Wittig's "One is not born a woman," argues that, "...they are seen as *women*, therefore they *are* women. But before being *seen* that way, they first had to be *made* that way" (Wittig 23). Kate's construction of an acceptable, or "tamed" woman, simply shows the ease of gender identity con-

struction. Her final monologue exploits the insincere and artificial construction of her femininity. Further, the fact that Petruchio understands the simplicity behind constructing an identity proves that he thinks progressively.

Petruchio does more than try to tame Kate—he acknowledges that he has an intelligent adversary and stimulates her mind instead of solely relying on starvation and sleep deprivation. Petruchio shows Kate that he, unlike her father, supports and defends her here, “And here she stand, touch her whoever dare. / I’ll bring my action on the proudest he / that stops my way in Padua” (3.3.104-106). He also shows Kate how her behavior appears and forces her to become the defender of politeness and decency, a position Kate has never taken before. Kate begs Petruchio to be kinder to the servants, “I pray you husband, be not so disquiet. / The meat was well, if you were so contented” (4.1.148-149). Through this plea, Kate realizes both how she appears to others, and the simplicity behind altering appearances. This process teaches each how to cooperate with the other in order to become a unified front. When Kate finally agrees with Petruchio, “But sun it is not when you say it is not” (4.6.20), he begins to let her have what she wants as well. Petruchio does not want a broken Kate, as we see how she shines in her performance in the final act, with all her aggression and passion intact. Her lengthy performance at the end of the play does not denote a destroyed spirit, but rather an excited actress enjoying manipulating her audience. She concludes her lengthy speech saying, “Then vail your stomachs, for it is no boot, / And place your hands below your husband’s foot, / In a token of which duty, if he please, / My hand is ready, may it do him ease” (5.2.184). Kate makes the most dramatic of requests, saying that women who place their hand under their husband’s foot show trust in the marriage. This shows her trust in Petruchio, for she knows that he would never ask her to do so. Also, she has discovered a partner and an ally through which she can better herself in society. He shares her mastery of language, but Kate’s mastery of language leaves Petruchio’s peers fooled and wins him the bet. Petruchio’s sentiment “Come Kate, we’ll to bed” solidifies their union (5.2.188). The two finally reach a level where they can consummate their marriage. This one line, as opposed to Katherine’s over forty lines, shows that she dominated the final

scene. Katherine understands the game and plays it effectively, subtly overcoming female oppression and mastering those around her. She does not sacrifice any of her masculine characteristics; in this final monologue we see her aggressive, outspoken, and authoritative, despite the fact that she argues for relinquishing authority. In this final scene Kate possesses aggression, dominates the attention of all, and frees herself from her family. She uses her intellect to play a game of identity manipulation—mastered it with an unfeminine personality—and possesses a life more desirous than all of her peers.

With Desdemona we see the continuation of the subtle feminist, who while not a revolution starter, during her life rebels against social norms and exposes weakness in the patriarchy. Desdemona, like Kate, has masculine characteristics. Possessing courage and a rebellious nature, she does not show docility or weakness, and does not respond to intimidation. Desdemona's courageous attitude rails against her delusional male father, rebelling against his marriage wishes for her and following her own desires. She declares in open court, "And so much duty as my mother showed / to you, preferring you before her father, / So much I challenge that I may profess / Due to the Moor my lord" (1.3.185-188). She confronts her father, and denies loyalty to him in favor of a man he does not approve. Her demanding, unrelenting nature toward her husband appears when she argues on behalf of Cassius. She does not simply suggest action to Othello with regards toward his meeting with Cassius, but sees that it runs its course. Demanding a time frame, "Why then, tomorrow night, or Tuesday morn, / On Tuesday noon, or night, on Wednesday morn - / I prithee name the time, but let it not / Exceed three days" (3.3.61-64). She demands here, but not on behalf of herself. Not a jealous woman, she seeks justice on behalf of her husband's friend. Desdemona's murder vividly pinpoints flaws with patriarchal, sexist attitudes towards women, rather than making a failure of feminism. Desdemona dies because her husband does not *communicate* with his wife. He lets Iago capitalize on his insecurities and instead of allowing Desdemona a voice in their relationship, he makes every lethal decision towards her in *silence* with little evidence outside of his own convictions. He decides after speaking to Iago, and before speaking to Desdemona that

“She’s gone. I am abused, and my relief / Must be to loathe her” (3.3.271-272). Not only does he resolve her guilt based on Iago’s convictions, but he also resolves to *loathe* her. If he had regarded her as a human being, and kept healthy marital communication alive, Desdemona would not have died, and nor would have he.

Shakespeare criticizes Othello’s blind trust of his male companion and ensign, Iago, over his wife. Millet discusses male house comradery and its use in excluding women from power in *Sexual Politics*, which particularly applies to Othello and Iago’s exclusion of Desdemona. Millet claims that house comradery, particularly sports and warfare, bonds men and creates a power structure that alienates women, arguing that, “[w]hile hunting, politics, religion, and commerce may play a role, sport and warfare are consistently the chief cement of men’s house comradery. . . . The institution’s less genial function as a power center within a state of sexual antagonism is an aspect of the phenomenon which often goes less noticed” (Millet 48-49). Due to Othello and Iago’s bond through the military, which excludes women, Othello develops an unhealthy trust toward someone undeserving. Woman’s exclusion from traditionally masculine spheres breeds and encourages ideas of female inferiority and brings men together in ways they believe incapable by women. When Othello operates on these ideas and chooses to trust his male military comrade over his wife, it results in disaster. When he interrogates Emilia, he discredits her defense of Desdemona with little reason. He only relies on Iago’s testimony, declaring that, “[t]his is a subtle whore, / A closet lock and key of villainous secrets, / And yet she’ll knell and pray – I ha’ seen her do’t” (4.1.22-24). Instead of listening to Emilia’s defense of Desdemona and further investigating, he only seems further convinced of Desdemona’s guilt. Both he and his wife die as a result of his ill judgment inspired by sexist ideology.

Othello passes judgment on his wife’s silence; and when she tries to defend herself, he refuses the possibility of truth. In *Lies, Secrets, and Silences*, Adrienne Rich discusses the problems with language in regards to women that sexist ideology has produced. She argues, “Truthfulness has not been considered important for women, as long as we have remained physically faithful to a man, or chaste” (Rich 445). Herein lies the problem for Desdemona, for none of the accusations against her hold validity. However, if a

woman's honesty holds no importance, women can only fail when defending themselves against accusations of infidelity. Because the patriarchy forbids them to deal in important matters, they have no history of honesty in grave situations. Unfortunately, no evidence exists that can readily disprove Iago's accusation of Desdemona's unfaithfulness. Because of Othello's ill placed bond with Iago, he does not recognize that the accusation, while impossible to disprove, likewise has no hard proof. However, he chooses to listen to Iago. Rich provides commentary on the issue of accusation, asserting that, "[p]atriarchal lying has manipulated women both through falsehood and through silence. Facts we needed have been withheld from us. False witness has been born against us" (446). Indeed the patriarchy affords Iago a battle that he cannot lose. Emilia withholds evidence against her mistress due to her husband's orders. Iago, of course, serves the false witness. Sexist ideology motivates the tragedy until her murder. Desdemona confronts Iago, insisting, "I will be hanged if some eternal villain, . . . / Have not devised this slander. I will be hanged else" (4.2.134-136). Desdemona realizes that someone has born false witness against her, and that unless he retracts it, her testimony possesses no validity.

Shakespeare's final feminist commentary in this tragedy occurs with Desdemona's death. Othello decides to kill Desdemona because he saw Cassius with the handkerchief. He declares, "...A murder, which I thought a sacrifice. / I saw the handkerchief" (5.2.70-71). He does not listen to Desdemona or Emilia, but instead depends upon Iago's interpretation of events, a stolen handkerchief, and a duplicated handkerchief. As she dies, Desdemona retains every ounce of dignity; she never succumbs to begging, and she never lies—at least not to Othello. The moment she realizes that he may be punished for her murder, she attempts to save him. She cries, "Nobody. I myself. Farewell. / Commend me to my kind lord" (5.2.133-134). With her last words she seeks to exonerate Othello, and through this all patriarchal ideology crumbles as the female, supposed to be weak and vulnerable, seeks in her final moments to protect he who should have protected her. This act shows males as weak, ignorant, easily fooled, and in need of protection instead. Othello becomes pathetic once he realizes his wrong doing, and gives up

entirely. Moments before killing himself, Othello proclaims, "I took by th' throat the circumcised dog / and smote him thus," then stabs himself (5.2.363-364). He compares himself to a circumcised dog, and then, with little left in life, ends his own. Shakespeare shows us the loss of a kind, courageous woman with the loss of Desdemona. He demonstrates the cost of Othello's sexism, fueled by privileging a male opinion above that of his wife. Shakespeare triumphs her cause, and vilifies the sexism around her. Her strength and intelligence gives her power, and Othello's sexism leads him, and his wife, into tragedy.

Finally, in the comedy *Much Ado about Nothing*, Beatrice's wit, mastery of language, and commanding persona set her apart from expectations of women during her time. Millet would argue that she possesses something quite unlike society's desired conventional female personality: "passivity, ignorance, docility." Shakespeare creates a remarkably powerful woman whose tendency to act instead of hesitate puts into motion the plan that ultimately saves her cousin. Despite the fact that Beatrice and Benedick represent an effective and happy couple acting as a unified front, Beatrice shows her aggressive nature best when paired with Benedick's hesitation. The pairing of Benedick and Beatrice as two individuals who work together and complement each other, is progressive. It contrasts the wife being dominated or outshined by the husband and displays a provocative departure from conventional ideas that it was acceptable to trade women, like property, between men. Penny Mansfield and Jean Collard discuss marital problems from a feminist perspective in "Solving Problems and Airing Feelings." They argue, "Women expressing their feelings in this way were a threat for many men. Husbands could not understand what their wives meant, or what they could do about it, or what it indicated about their marriage. It was a rare husband who could be confided in successfully" (Mansfield and Collard 192). Women want and need communication in marriage; this serves as a vehicle for cooperation and companionship. As with the marriage of Kate and Petruchio, Shakespeare again presents not only an unconventional female character, but also an unconventional union, where each regards and respects the other as an individual. Beatrice and Benedick communicate effectively. In fact, their communication and confidence help Hero avoid her disastrous fate.

While Beatrice's society does not allot her any power, we see Beatrice and Benedick act in an egalitarian union. Once consumed with playful verbal sparring, when disaster visits Hero, the two quickly band together and work together as equals. Benedick does not decide to handle the situation and leave Beatrice in the dark; instead, the two converse on every step of the plan. He informs her of his progress with Claudio because he respects her. For instance, he explains to her the following, "But I must tell thee plainly, Claudio / undergoes my challenge, and either I must shortly hear from / him or I will subscribe him a coward" (5.2.46-49). However, in their dialogue the cooperation displays Beatrice's masculine characteristics and Benedick's feminization. Benedick expresses an aversion to action and a desire for a non-violent outcome. He begs her to postpone her aggressive feelings when he says, "Tarry, Good Beatrice. By this hand, I love thee" (4.1.319). He responds gently and seeks to dissuade her through emotion. Beatrice responds aggressively, as she proposes violence with little thought. Beatrice demands that Benedick help her bring justice to her shamed cousin with the curt statement, "Kill Claudio" (4.1.287). Benedick acquiesces and confronts Claudio: "Enough, I am engaged. I will challenge him. I will / kiss your hand, and so I leave you. By this hand, Claudio shall / render me a dear account" (4.1.325-327). Throughout the ordeal Beatrice and Benedick act as a unified front, though Beatrice demands action, while feminized Benedick hesitates and investigates, reluctant to resort to violence. However, through both of their methods they help to reveal the truth and leave all unharmed.

Not only does Shakespeare toy with gender roles, but he also shows man and woman acting *together* instead of dominating the other. Peggy Reeves Sanday discusses what a sexually egalitarian society would actually constitute in *Female Power and Male Dominance: On the Origins of Sexual Inequality*. She states, "Finally, where males do not display aggression towards women and women exercise political and economic authority or power, the relationship between the sexes will be defined as equal" (Sanday 88). While clearly addressing society as a whole, the family unit structure mimics the higher social order. If in their partnership both Beatrice and Benedick have a respected say in the decision-

making process, then their union leans toward an egalitarian one, with potential for respectful listening and cooperation.

While her sparring partner when it comes to the battle of wit, Benedick does not quite meet the mark of Beatrice's intellectual match. Benedick's wit shows less cultivation than Beatrice's, for once an idea takes root in his head, he interprets the rest of the world to suit it. Benedick incorrectly assumes, "Ha! 'Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to / dinner.' There's a double meaning in that" (2.3.227-228). Unfortunately for Benedick no double meaning exists here, but he hopefully seeks to reconstruct her statement. When the friends gather together to perform a sort of match making for Benedick and Beatrice, Benedick's susceptibility leaves him ready to believe a story that seems unlikely. However, in order to manipulate Beatrice, Hero only tells her the truth about herself, knowing that she would not be likely to fall for embellished stories. She criticizes Beatrice, and Beatrice reacts as they had anticipated, "What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true? / Stand I condemned for pride and scorn so much?" (3.1.108-109). In order to get Beatrice's attention, Hero must talk about *Beatrice*. She does not worry about what Benedick thinks or does, as she focuses more on her own mind and selfhood.

Beatrice frequently overwhelms Benedick with verbal aggression, resulting in a flamboyant comedic display. She hurts his feelings at the masquerade ball by talking to someone she did not think was him. She described Benedick to this person, who unfortunately turned out to be Benedick, as, "Why, he is the Prince's jester, a very dull fool" (2.1.117). Benedick responds to Beatrice's attack, rather wounded, "O, she misused me past the endurance of a block" (2.1.209). Beatrice exhibits power in their relationship through language, thereby holding power over him. He responds easily to what she thinks of him. His friends use this to manipulate him to fall for her. Beatrice's intelligence and her power over Benedick allow her to help her cousin, Hero. Ultimately Shakespeare presents a strong, intelligent woman who acquires a union with a man who respects her opinions and decisions. Beatrice ultimately decides whether or not they will be married, "I would not deny you, but by this good day, I yield / upon great persuasion..." (5.4.93-95). She agrees to marry him because, throughout their ordeal, he has shown and persuaded her to think

of him as a partner. Benedick demonstrates and persuades Beatrice of his worthiness, founding their marriage upon substantial trials and verbal negotiations between the two. Hero, her passive, inherently feminine cousin, finds herself victimized, humiliated, and subject to a relationship with Claudio that reflects little of the trust Beatrice and Benedick have in each other. Shakespeare displays ideas of feminism with Beatrice's unfeminine persona, rewarding her with a fulfilling marriage that operates on both members supporting and respecting the other.

Portia, another woman who defies conventional ideas of femininity, disguises herself as a man in order to save the lives of the main male characters in *The Merchant of Venice*. The success of Portia stems from her own strength, commanding presence, and mastery of language, none of which would be described as feminine characteristics. Portia acts independently, she does not willingly accept the terms of Shylock's bond as Antonio does, and she actually has a cohesive plan to save Antonio, unlike the begging and railing that Bassanio utilizes in court. She manages to free Antonio from his bond by revealing a loophole. First, she agrees that the bond does entitle Shylock to a pound of Antonio's flesh, but then notes that it does not entitle him to any of Antonio's *blood*, displayed when she proclaims, "This bond doth give thee no jot of blood" (4.1.300-1). She does not lie, but uses her wit to twist the definition of one specific word in order to save her husband's friend. Portia goes further in dismantling Shylock, for she redistributes his wealth to his enemies, declaring, "The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive / shall seize one half of his goods; the other half / comes to the privy coffer of the state, / And the offender's life lies in the mercy / of the Duke only" (4.1.347-51). Portia constructs a position of power and validates it by punishing Shylock. In this scene, she demonstrates control over the lead male characters, for she saves Antonio's life, nearly destroys Shylock, and frees Bassanio from any further misery he might have due to his irresponsible nature. However, despite the fact that she acknowledges her role in saving them, she requires nothing of them in return. She states, "He is well paid that is well satisfied, / And I, delivering you, am satisfied, / And therein do account myself well paid" (4.1.410-413). As a result, Portia acknowledges her power. She does not express modesty, she does

not imply that Antonio and Bassanio somehow helped, and gives no credit to anyone but herself. Self possessed, she knows her capabilities, and exactly what she *alone* accomplished.

Antonio's inability to help himself feminizes his response, similar to women who do not retaliate when abused. He willingly agrees that he should be punished, "The Duke cannot deny the course of the law, / for the commodity that strangers have / with us in Venice, if it be denies, / will much impeach the justice of the state" (3.4.26-29). He demonstrates no strength or desire to fight for his life, and again he shows how little he intends to try to better his situation when he states, "I do oppose / My patience to his fury, and am armed / To suffer with a quietness of spirit / The very tyranny and rage of his" (4.1.9-13). Antonio offers patience in the face of anger and quietness instead of rage. This pose shows his docility, submissive nature, and his ultimate weakness. Once more he demonstrates reluctance to better his awful position when he says, "But with all brief and plain conveniency / Let me have my judgment and the Jew his will" (4.1.81-82). Until Portia appears in court, every argument Antonio makes on behalf of himself serves as an admittance of defeat. He does not look for loopholes; he doesn't try to negotiate. It is almost as though Antonio desires to suffer as a sacrifice on behalf of his friend as he shows here, "I am a tainted wether of the flock, / Meetest for death. The weakest kind of fruit drops earliest to the ground; and so let me" (4.1.113-115). His resignation of his fate serves as a foil to Portia's active role in both their fates. Instead of accepting hopelessness and defeat, she uses her intelligence to create an outcome she controls. She utilizes her powerful presence to convince the court. Antonio's resignation and sense of defeat feminize him, and Portia's strength, determination, and wit masculinize her, making her the play's hero.

Portia's power uniquely demonstrates itself in the public sphere, but does not disappear in the domestic sphere. In the final scene the audience sees Portia effectively manage her home, establishing her authority by having Antonio make Bassanio promise to keep her ring. She states, "Then you shall be his surety. / Give him this, / and bid him keep it better than the other" (5.1.253-4). Once they exchange the ring this final time, Portia shows Antonio that his intimate friendship with Bassanio will no longer be Bassanio's

first priority, but instead she will be priority as his wife. In Suzanne Penuel's article, "Castrating the Creditor in *The Merchant of Venice*," Penuel pays attention to the power transitions that occur in this scene. She argues, "He (Antonio) transfers allegiance to Portia, another sometimes masculine, sometimes feminine figure, and her ensuing munificence makes Antonio dependent, just as his had made Bassanio dependent earlier. Portia, though threatening, is a safer sort of emotional-financial creditor...she cannot claim to have created him, to have been responsible for his success" (Penuel 263). Penuel acknowledges Portia's shape shifting nature with her "sometimes masculine, sometimes feminine figure." Bassanio may regard Portia as a safer choice; however, she gains Bassanio, she shows Antonio the door, and she creates a home that serves her desires. The final living arrangements, as well as the court settlements that occurred earlier, happen in accordance with Portia's desires. All the men are particularly weak in this play, showing little control over their actions. Portia, however, controls and organizes some of the most wide reaching decisions in the play. More interestingly, Portia acts independently. Until Act V the men know nothing of Portia's inclusion into the courtroom, and only are enlightened because Portia chooses to reveal herself. In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir argues how women are defined with regards to men, and not with regards to themselves; but with Portia's actions in *The Merchant of Venice*, the exact opposite unfolds. De Beauvoir states, "She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other" (de Beauvoir 439). But Portia *is* "the essential." Without Portia, Antonio and Bassanio do not possess the skills to find the loophole in Shylock's bond. Also, Portia acts as an independent agent from her first line. Men do not define Portia, but without a father she acts as the head of her household. After rescuing Antonio, she makes sure to lay the parameters for Bassanio's married life with her. She defines *him*.

In these four Shakespearean dramas, women whose circumstances allow them to elude the domestic sphere show themselves as active, powerful participants in their own destinies, who frequently reveal or subvert a weak patriarchy. All of these women

use traits gendered as masculine to accomplish their goals: Kate to escape her family and have a new stage on which to perform, Desdemona to marry a man outside of her father's wishes, Beatrice to save her cousin's life, and Portia to save the lives of her husband and his friend. All these women possess a mastery of language shown through Kate in her final ironic performance of wifely duty, through Desdemona as she exposes her father in public, through Beatrice as she is continually the comic center as well as the inspiration for the actions that send Benedick to save Hero, and through Portia's interpretation of the law. They possess masculine power in feminine bodies. Shakespeare was one of the first writers to use women as active participants in their own destinies, and takes it further in these plays as they are also active participants in the destinies of others. Not only are the women strong and active, but frequently the men are feminized. They show weakness and hesitation. Shakespeare manipulates gender roles and toys with gender inequality in a way that supports early ideas of feminism and confronts problems of sexual inequality, suggesting more fulfilling forms of interaction between the genders.

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Meta-Desire: Private Histrionics and Negotiations through John Barth's "Funhouse"

BY
Kimberly Williams

John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse* features the focus of my analysis, "Lost in the Funhouse." The implications and consequences of desire in the eponymous tale are as varied as the confused desires of its protagonist, Ambrose. His fear and confusion in the face of his desires prevent him from achieving the position of a privileged binary position in his relationships. Desire fractures Ambrose chronologically within the text, creating multiple Ambroses through multiple situations. The recursivity of Ambrose's history, or the repeated non-negotiable situations that end with Ambrose still lacking an understanding of himself in those situations, shows the melding of Ambrose and Barth through autobiographical angles, plot elements, and postmodern devices to define the funhouse repeatedly as a place of desire. Desire in "Lost in the Funhouse" creates obstacles to desire. This meta-desire compels and inhibits all actions and which is by nature recursive is the force, which propels and inhibits those actions of character and author in "Lost in the Funhouse" as well as being the desire to control or extinguish the desire to leave the funhouse and to complete the story.

Ambrose's role as the "Master" in the game of Masters and Niggers is subverted by Magda as she "leads him" to the place of her punishment. The game itself is not sinister, but the addition of sensual overtones implies that there is more to a simple game of bargaining and authority. The exotic description of the "Torture Chamber" coupled with Magda's playfully sensual behavior engenders a fear in the immature Ambrose which he chooses to channel into a postured, private fantasy in which he truly believes himself to be "Master." Ambrose's fear is not of Magda per se; he is afraid of himself because he lacks the awareness to navigate the rules and nuances of the game, indicating his lack of self-awareness that is imperative to the traditional bildungsroman.

Once three years previously the young people played Niggers and Masters in the backyard; Ambrose was afraid to punish Magda alone, but she led him to the whitewashed Torture Chamber between the woodshed and the privy in the Slaves Quarters; there she knelt sweating among bamboo [...], pleadingly embraced his knees, and while bees droned in the lattice as if on an ordinary summer afternoon, purchased clemency as a surprising price set by herself. (Barth 77-8)

His desire to be alone with Magda is combined with the desire to “punish” her prescribed by the game, creating a doubling effect further doubled by Ambrose’s thinking of it during Ocean City. Ambrose recalls this moment as a moment of passion, showing off his inner histrionics (Barth 78). Ambrose’s focus on the event is depicted theatrically; Magda remembers nothing at all whereas Ambrose “seemed unable to forget the least detail of his life,” where the event’s importance in the scheme of Ambrose’s personal history is grossly inflated (Barth 78). Magda’s desire to succumb to the role of slave, though playfully, creates in her a sensual kind of passive dominance and subsequently a power over Ambrose in his own desire. His savoring and reinventing of the moment they shared is indicative of his confusion over its meaning; Ambrose was never the “Master” in his altercation with Magda. Neither is he “Master” or occupier of any privileged binary position in any of his relationships. Ambrose’s anxieties are private and serve a teleological purpose; these anxieties have both a design and a purpose, which is to say that they model the author’s private anxieties regarding the story as well as shape “Lost in the Funhouse” into a coming of age tale. Barth’s anxieties as the writer present themselves through Ambrose’s confusion and create tension through his intrusions. “By constantly playing upon the tension between words as signifiers and words as signs, the ‘text’ purportedly denies any dimension beyond language” (Woolley 460). Ambrose was the “Master” of the binary of him and Magda although he was also the “Slave;” he was the nominal “Master” in reality and can only achieve such a nominal status. Ambrose’s constant fear and confusion and his inherent desire to know himself and examine his place in the scheme of his reality keep him from living an actual life and experiencing any true

moments of passion. Ambrose's desire to be the master does not disappear; that desire is mitigated by the bargain she makes and Ambrose redirects his energy toward remembering this instant as one of passion. He seems to have forgotten his fear of the moment in his self-reflexive retelling of the memory. His desire compels him to punish Magda but also gives her power that he does not understand; therefore, his intense fear marks his intense desire.

Desire fractures Ambrose chronologically within the text, which reinscribes the ambiguity of his narrative as well as the larger narrative containing the plot. Barth writes two versions of Ambrose here, where he betrays his own authorial anxiety concerning the correct plot trajectory as shown through Ambrose's fractured behavior.

Naturally he didn't have enough nerve to ask Magda to go through the funhouse with him. With incredible nerve and to everyone's surprise he invited Magda, quietly and politely, to go through the funhouse with him. "I warn you, I've never been through it before," he added, laughing easily: "but I reckon we can manage somehow. The important thing to remember, after all, is that it's meant to be a funhouse; that is a place of amusement. If people really got lost or injured or too badly frightened in it, the owner'd go out of business. There'd even be lawsuits. No character in a work of fiction can make a speech this long without interruption or acknowledgement from the other characters." (Barth 90)

Because of the two different statements at the beginning of this passage and the intrusion at the end, which states that Ambrose should have been interrupted already, we can surmise that Ambrose actually did not invite Magda into the funhouse with him. His desire to invite her is so strong that it creates a breach in the true events of the story, enabling a sort of daydream narrated by Ambrose and allowing us to see his magnanimous "Master" side, which can only come out during his private posturing and histrionics sessions. In performing the role of writer, Barth possibly uses that role to posture and act out the role of "Master" as Ambrose attempts to do. The defining of the funhouse as a harmless arena for amusement without losses or injuries, continuously

protected by laws and the threat of lawsuits, is Ambrose's way of protesting too much. During his daydream, he tries to reassure Magda in this way, but we know that he is only reassuring himself because it is his daydream and because the extra fictitious Magda does not participate in the dialogue. The funhouse seems more terrifying now, more precarious and certainly ungoverned by any laws that Ambrose or we would know and or understand. Barth's assertion that no character can speak for that long without interruption is an attempt at taking charge of the narrative, to make it his own instead of Ambrose's (90). Ambrose's perception of his own pseudo-magnanimous quality is a man-of-the-world persona he effects to perpetuate an air of maturity that he has not yet attained. The language Ambrose uses during his day dream/interlude is cowboy-esque, with words like "reckon" and phrases like "we'll manage." Ambrose's desire to seem experienced, virile, and commanding of situations is evident. His desires can only be articulated in his own mind. Ambrose's language changes not only through the force of his desire but also through Barth's authorial will to tinker with his character's style of speaking. The virile and take-charge language attributed to a possible Ambrose is an

The indeterminate space of the funhouse is a stage for Ambrose's investigation and formation of his adolescent identity and for his mapping and re-mapping of identity. Barth frequently reminds the reader that he is afraid that we will have to exist within the narrative structure forever if he cannot achieve the normal culmination present in Freitag's Triangle. Barth's inclusion of the reader in his anxiety as the author creates a sense of insecurity and instability in the entire text. The intimations of the author are that the culmination of the plot will never happen; hence, we are imprisoned within the Möbius strip present in Barth's "Frame-Tale." The continuous looping of the same tale with minute, if any, deviations from the original plot trajectory provide anxiety for both author and protagonist; if there is no "end" to "Lost in the Funhouse," then what does it matter that the other conventions of plot are followed? "The "text" heroically foregoes the old securities of presence—signification, thematic unity, totalizing form— and accepts the existentialist challenge to confront the lack of a center at the heart of language and to dwell in that void. Hence, runs the deconstructionist myth,

the lack of meaning at the center of a text is a “truer and more authentic meaning” (Woolley 460). The main signifier that this exchange with the silent Magda is only in Ambrose’s mind is his lengthy dream speech. Ambrose’s desire to be autonomous and speak freely is evident in the other Ambroses he creates; his desire to fade into the background of reality is also evident because of the internal quality of his discussions and discoveries. These two Ambroses are like the reader and Barth the author; they have different desires and different jobs to perform within the text. Ambrose’s warning Magda of his funhouse virginity and immediate qualifying statement that he can handle it is an affectation. This is something a dandy from another type of story would say; Ambrose created yet another Ambrose to handle a thought or feeling engendered by his roving desires but not tamed by them. Ambrose’s warning anyone is laughable; despite all of his desire, he is too fearful to face up to the funhouse.

The recursivity of Ambrose’s recent history shows the confusion between Ambrose and John Barth through autobiographical intrusions and plot devices to continuously redefine the funhouse as a place of desire. Ambrose’s romantic way of conceptualizing his future has no basis in his recent history, and his lack of self-awareness is betrayed by his mythologizing and private redefining of himself: “Somewhere in the world there was a young woman with such splendid understanding that she’d see him entire, like a poem or a story, and find his words so valuable after all that when he confessed his apprehensions she would explain why they were in fact the very things that made him precious to her [...] There was no such girl” (Barth 92). The use of “somewhere in the world” causes this passage to read like a fairy tale or myth. The existence of a particular woman may be true in a sense because it is mythologized here, and it may not be true because it has no basis in fact. Ambrose has romanticized any girl that he could be comfortable with because he has never met such girl or woman.

Ambrose’s desire to meet the perfect woman is elevated to a desire to meet a mythological figure. Ambrose’s belief that this figure would view him as a circumscribed entity, a thing whole in itself, a “poem or story,” shows his desire to be “read” by this person, interpreted and understood; this is a sneaky piece of metafiction. Barth’s desire to be understood bleeds into Ambrose’s

similar desire to create Ambrose the Poem. Ambrose would be able to confess his own apprehensions to this person, and these apprehensions would be mythologized. This is another daydream/fantasy that histrionic Ambrose keeps to himself; the idea that he could be understood without fully understanding himself is terrifying. He will never reach the position of “Master” or privileged member of a binary pair if he never learns about himself by letting someone else learn for him.

Ambrose’s desire for a mythological love interest who can read him like a book is greater than his desire for self-reflexive learning. The narration of the passage ends with the “truth” that there is no such girl as Ambrose has been dreaming. His hopes and the hopes of Barth and the reader have been dashed. Ambrose’s dashed hopes are significant because they mirror the portrayal of Freitag’s Triangle within the story; just as the triangle may never be complete, Ambrose may never reach a full understanding of himself and, consequently, will be unable to navigate the “funhouse” or his own confusing adolescence. “Myths, symbolism, interior monologue, time shifts, varieties of point of view, esoteric word play— all are employed, parodied, and refreshed as Barth’s vision of the funhouse is defined. Barth is convinced that his artistic victory can be gained only by confronting the recent past and ‘employ[ing] it against itself to accomplish new human work’” (Hinden 191). The recursive nature of the text is imperative; reliving and attempting to re-create moments in the recent past on the part of the protagonist is the posturing of an overly conscious character influenced too heavily by the autobiographical biases of the author, and these examinations on the part of Ambrose are constructed through Barth’s constructions. “The unbearable self-consciousness of intellectual life” examined in the tale is a construction of Barth and of Barth as Ambrose (Hinden 191). The self-consciousness inherent in the text and evidenced in Barth’s intrusions indicate Ambrose’s self-reflexive fear and confusion concerning his own experiences and impotent desire to overcome, which could be autobiographical for Barth and biographical for any writers engaged in a process that they desire to overcome. The plot devices that Hinden outlines all contribute to the fracturing of the protagonist,^t but they are driven by his various desires, which fracture him into possibly infinite

Ambroses who will never be satisfied. Ambrose's desires seem to be wrong; if he desired some other kind of girl, it is implied that maybe he would have at least gotten to meet her or gain an attempt at a relationship. This is reflexively false because Ambrose could only exist as the real Ambrose with a girl who treats him like a certain archaic kind of book with all of its misspellings and grammatical mistakes. Barth has constructed Ambrose as a flawed text who desires to be read most of all and cannot because he has no ideal reader. Barth's conception of the Baroque dictates that a work must serve as a model to itself, defining and exhausting its own possibilities of invention and procedure as if to caricature its own emerging form (Hinden 193). Ambrose's thoughts and actions are created repeatedly, slightly different each time, in Barth's attempt to re-read his own text. Because of the ambiguity of Ambrose and of the narrative's problematic chronology, we never know which Ambrose we are reading, creating nervousness and anxiety in the reader that mirrors the anxiety felt by Ambrose and by Barth as an author attempting to be original in the face of the literary canon. The confronting of the recent past and its use to do "new human work" is seen in the passage of the game of Masters and Niggers where Ambrose romanticizes his first moment of desire because he has no idea how to codify his experience (Hinden 191). He was afraid during the experience and during the Ocean City trip, he self-reflexively daydreams or indulges in his private histrionics, entertaining his own magnanimous character and dashing his own hopes of achieving a mature and aloof personality through his interior affectations. All of the plot devices employed by Barth are used to continually define and redefine the funhouse for the purpose of completing the plot trajectory and finishing Ambrose's narrative.

The funhouse is a place of desire, filled with raucous sailors and frisky teenagers. It is possibly lined with human filth, and the explanation of the conception of generations is included in Ambrose's foray into the funhouse, to define it not only as a place of physical and emotional desire but as a place of disappointment, unfulfilled desire, fear of the unknown, and the heroic desire to negotiate the horrid but necessary obstacle. Dainotto writes that

excremental sublimity consists of a narrative practice which I have defined as a movement from blockage to release. It encompasses a more general postmodern trend: it includes any strategy of incorporating social myths and given plots to finally release new stories and new modes of being. In this sense, we might well conceive of the postmodern subject as a sphincter muscle performing its daily activity of retention, manipulation, and ex-pression (125).

Bowel movements and episodes of vomiting can be viewed as obstacles in the progress of everyday life; Ambrose is blocked in the funhouse or stagnant in this stage of his life and unable to move forward/progress without voiding some of his fears and apprehensions of the unknown. "Funhouses need men's and ladies' rooms at intervals. Others perhaps have also vomited in corners and corridors; may even have had bowel movements liable to be stepped in in the dark" (Barth 79-80). Barth incorporates some of the mundane events of Ambrose's recent history and daily life in order to release a new Ambrose once he has passed through the funhouse. Ambrose's musings on how to construct his own recursive narrative encapsulate his desire to differentiate his self-reflexive narrative from that of Barth, which is perpetually unfulfilled and keeps him in a state of hopelessness. His desires enlighten him to his predicament as a prisoner of the Mobius strip; these problematic desires drive the plot but punish Barth's protagonist, keeping him from enjoying his recursive existence by separating him from his own ignorance. The lack of plot traditional plot trajectory due to imprisonment in the Mobius strip, which allows the story to appear to be the same during each revolution, mirrors Ambrose's lack of self-awareness; both of these "lacks" allow for the recursivity of "Lost in the Funhouse" as well as the separation of the protagonist from the events of the plot. A character who inhabits a Mobius strip does not know of his inherent recursivity. The idea of getting out of or through the funhouse is counter to what transpires within the text; Ambrose's desire to end his cyclical yet evolutionary existence in the scheme of Barth's "funhouse" is the desire to end the recursive process, a desire for destruction which cannot exist.

Schulz writes that Ambrose as observant adolescent merges with Ambrose as author of his story at the beginning stage of learning how to construct a narrative. In the latter role he usurps the voice of Barth and muses self-referentially about the technical problems of telling an endlessly recursive story of a young man growing up to become a writer telling the story of a young man growing up to become. . . . Thus, the midpoint story presents a variant version of the “Frame-Tale” in its reiteration of the Mobius paradigm. (8)

“Lost in the Funhouse” as a variant of “Frame-Tale” is a kind of meta-desire. *Funhouse* wants to be as many things as “FT” does; because of the mimetics and recursivity they can aspire to minute differences each time a repetition happens. Meta-desire drives the desires of the plot and the characters, like Ambrose’s desire to “master” his own feelings of desire for Magda and the ensuing confusion that this problematic codifying of desire engenders. Barth’s desire to achieve, to succeed as his creation is mirrored in Ambrose’s desire to become, if only histrionically and in his own mind. These desires are furious, omnipresent, and possibly futile; they are certainly preventative in Ambrose’s potentially amorous or mature situations and possibly somehow in Barth’s role as writer.

Desire in “Lost in the Funhouse” is in opposition to itself; this meta-desire creates cycles of activity and stagnation through recursivity. Meta-desire compels and inhibits all actions by protagonist and author because it is the desire to utilize, manage, and control desire by Ambrose and John Barth. Recursivity is inherent in this text of meta-desire because of the futility of that desire and the failure of its achievements; desire must try again always, with a slightly different but similarly ineffectual outcome each time. Ambrose and Barth’s desires to “leave the funhouse,” whether literally, in the sense of coming-of-age, or in finishing a story are futile; these desires create the funhouse and keep both from leaving its confines.

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The Four Daughters of God in William Langland's *Piers Plowman*

BY
Lindsay Rogillio

William Langland's *Piers Plowman*, a fourteenth century allegorical poem, presents the debate of the Four Daughters of God in regards to the atonement of mankind. According to a long tradition of the allegory of the Four Daughters, their deliberation occurred "at the time of the creation of man, the time of the Fall, or, most frequently, the time of the Incarnation," concerning the fate of man (Frank 93). The allegorical figures of Truth and Righteousness insist mankind deserves Hell and eternal punishment for their sins against God, while Mercy and Peace contend for mankind's forgiveness. Although Langland also employs this tradition of the Four Daughters in *Piers Plowman*, he chooses to resituate the debate among Mercy, Truth, Righteousness, and Peace to occur during the Harrowing of Hell—a placement that allows Langland to best present the "possibility of reconciliation" between God and mankind (Deagman 287). Langland incorporates the tradition of the Four Daughters of God into his poem by unconventionally placing their debate within the traditional story of the Harrowing; in doing so, Langland demonstrates that the seemingly conflicting divine attributes of Mercy and Truth can be reconciled, a resolution that provides a model of conduct and practice for medieval Christians.

Before analyzing the tradition of the Four Daughters and what it signifies to medieval Christians, it is important to note the source of the tradition. Robert Frank states that the debate between the Four Daughters of God "was a popular theme in narrative and drama" during the Middle Ages (93). The tradition arose from the book of Psalms in the Bible; Psalm 84 praises God for putting aside his anger over mankind's sins and offering forgiveness for those who fear him. Psalm 84:11 in the *Latin Vulgate Bible* reads: "misericordia et veritas obviaverunt sibi; iustitia et pax osculatae sunt" (*Latin Vulgate Bible*); the closest translation of

the Vulgate Bible, the Douay-Rheims version, reads: “mercy and truth have met each other: justice and peace have kissed” (*Douay-Rheims Catholic Bible*). From this verse arises the foundation for the convention of the allegory of Mercy, Truth, Righteousness, and Peace as God’s “daughters.” From here, many early religious works included the debate of the Four Daughters of God, personifying the four qualities and engaging them in debate so as to demonstrate Mercy, Truth, Righteousness, and Peace as more human-like qualities that mankind could possess and practice as followers of God and Christ.

The widely known tradition of the Four Daughters in the Middle Ages descended from and was influenced by many earlier works. One of the first works to include the Four Daughters of God is the Jewish rabbinical text the *Midrash*, according to Hope Traver (*Four Daughters of God* 7). During the creation, the Four Daughters dispute mankind’s fate before God’s throne, and here, Traver claims, “the living allegory emerges” (FDG 48). Before the *Midrash*, another version of note is the *IV Esdras* in which Esdras “pleads God’s mercy against His justice,” a profound presentation “in debate form of the claims of mercy against justice” that later develops the tradition into the debate between the personified Mercy, Justice (Righteousness), Truth, and Peace (FDG 53). After this text, subsequent works usually depicted the debate of the Four Daughters during mankind’s redemption rather than the creation. Both Hugo of St. Victor’s and Bernard of Clairvaux’s sermons in the late twelfth century situated the Four Daughters’ debate during the redemption of mankind, and the latter’s allegorical depiction of it became the “basis of most of the succeeding work” and development of the allegory (FDG 7). Other versions, such as Dutchman Jacob van Maerlant’s thirteenth century *Merlijn*, positioned the debate of Mercy, Truth, Righteousness, and Peace occurring at the same time as the trial between the Virgin Mary and the Devil concerning a soul she wants to rescue from hell that the Devil argues against; this became known as the “Processus Belial” (FDG 7). The influence of these texts, particularly Bernard of Clairvaux’s, facilitated “modifications” of the story by authors such as Robert Grosseteste and Bonaventura that “determined the development of the allegory” in most of the subsequent versions (FDG 17). Grosseteste, as Traver claims, was one of

the major influences upon William Langland's depiction of the Four Daughters' debate in *Piers Plowman*, along with the Bible and the Gospel of Nicodemus, a text included in the Apocrypha that depicts the Harrowing of Hell (FDG 149). Along with the continuous tradition of the Four Daughters in earlier works, the influence of the Gospel of Nicodemus and its account of the Harrowing are significant to the development of Langland's depiction of the allegorical figures in *Piers Plowman*.

Since Langland chose to unconventionally place the Four Daughters' debate occurring simultaneously with the Harrowing, it is necessary to explore the background of the Harrowing so much as it affects the interpretation of the dispute and its outcome. The Harrowing of Hell, or the Latin: *Descensus Christi ad inferos*, is not necessarily part of the biblical story, but rather is part of the apostolic tradition, the body of teaching passed down from the apostles of Christ, that appeared to have significant authority as far as medieval Christianity was concerned. The Gospel of Nicodemus "circulated widely in the fourteenth century" and appears to be Langland's main source for incorporating the Harrowing into his poem (Black 354 n.6). Christopher Bond declares that the Harrowing "took an especially firm hold on the medieval imagination," which perhaps explains Langland's choice to place the debate of the Four Daughters during the Harrowing so as to emphasize the fate of mankind alongside an event that was evidently well-known and interesting to a medieval audience (177). The Gospel of Nicodemus related the account of Christ's descent into hell in order to rescue those who had existed and sinned before Christ—Adam, Eve, Abraham, etc. Nicodemus's account of the event was popular among the medieval laity because salvation appeared a more tangible possibility for those who were uneducated in complex theological matters, but still had major theological concerns such as "how...can all of us be saved?" (Black et al 345) Thus, Langland's decision to situate the debate among the allegorical figures Mercy, Truth, Righteousness, and Peace alongside the Harrowing was beneficial to the understanding of the common people.

Partly due to the placement of a major theological concern within a popular and well-known event, Langland's use of the tradition of the symbolic Four Daughters also benefited the

medieval laity's understanding of possible salvation through the use of allegory. Kenneth Haworth states "allegory...is in origin a method of interpretation" in which abstract ideas are symbolically represented so as to elucidate the meaning or message of a text (4). Allegory as a tool for interpreting texts serves to make complex notions, such as theology, more readily understandable and discernable. In an era such as the Middle Ages, laypeople did not have the opportunity to facilitate the capacity to ponder intangible theological ideas, therefore "issues [could be] simplified through allegory," and the abstract "theological questions... debated by the clergy," or learned men, were more accessible to those who were uneducated (Traver "FDG" 45). The "religious allegory" *Piers Plowman* became a "rallying cry for the low-born rebels of the Peasants' Revolt" in 1381—due to the laws put in place to limit social mobility and wages after the Great Famine and the Black Death—largely due to its social critiques, but also seemingly for a simplistic style that was accessible to the common people (Black et al 345). Langland's accessible and simplified style, including the "plain" language used and the familiar genre of the poem, was also easier to understand perhaps because of his incorporation of allegory that could exemplify to the common people the meaning of a theological notion in more readily comprehensible terms. Although it is evident *Piers Plowman* operates as an allegory, the particular kind of allegory employed in the poem—personification allegory—further elucidates the meaning and message of the poem for medieval laity.

Since *Piers Plowman* is considered a "personification allegory," it is necessary to define this particular type of allegory so as to point out its beneficence for an unlearned understanding. Haworth has included C.S. Lewis's explanation of personification allegory described as the depiction of abstract notions where one can "invent visibilia to express them" by way of creating characters to personify intangible concepts (4). Although Haworth speaks of personification allegory in regards to Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, his explanations and arguments also provide sufficient analytic approaches with which to evaluate Langland's *Piers Plowman*. Haworth explains that "Prudentius' aim" in depicting virtues allegorically as deities is to "recast them into a distinctly Christian image" that would be "more acceptable to his [Roman] readers"

(58); similarly, Langland's use of the Four Daughters of God tradition as personified characteristics of God serve to exemplify to medieval laypeople that God is both merciful and just, while at the same time demonstrating with the debate why he is both. By including the debate among the Four Daughters in his poem, "Langland unifies what were initially perceived to be conceptually irreconcilable aspects of God," in a manner that would allow medieval readers to more readily associate and relate to the human-like personifications of God's qualities (Deagman 287). Thus by personifying the allegorical figures of Mercy, Truth, Righteousness, and Peace, Langland can both present a model of conduct and practice for medieval Christians and demonstrate the mercy and justice of God.

In *Piers Plowman*, the allegory of the Four Daughters of God culminates in the resolution of God's mercy, righteousness, truth, and peace in order to redeem mankind from eternal punishment in hell. Robert Gleckner affirms this tradition, recognizing it as the "reconciliation of the heavenly virtues" from which mankind receives forgiveness for their sins (111). Before this reconciliation though, it is important to note the function of each allegorical and personified quality such as it explains the settlement of the two opposing sides of the argument given by Mercy and Peace and by Righteousness and Truth. Traver illuminates the basis of the two-sided debate among the Four Daughters by referencing Bernard of Clairvaux's depiction beginning with, "[m]an originally was clothed with the four virtues: [Mercy] to guard his steps, [Truth] to teach him, [Righteousness] to rule him, and [Peace] to cherish him" (*FDG* 16). Through original sin, man loses these four virtues, and through mankind's continual sin arises the debate as to whether man deserves to receive the benefits of mercy and peace, or deserves to suffer eternal punishment justified by his actions.

After the crucifixion, Christ descends into hell to recover those sinners who lived before his time, while Mercy and Truth meet each other and begin to debate mankind's deserving of forgiveness. Samuel C. Chew outlines the tradition of the debate as a deliberation in which "Truth, which is uncompromising, is the ally of Justice, and Peace, which, making allowance for special circumstances, seeks a compromise, is the ally of Mercy" (qtd. in Gleckner 111). The "gentle," "gracious," and "humble" lady

Mercy suggests to Truth that the light coming from hell signifies “that humanity will be delivered from darkness” by the sacrifice of Christ (Langland XVIII.115-6, 136). Truth counters Mercy’s proclamation asserting, “once something is in hell, it’s never coming out,” reinforcing the uncompromising disposition that Truth herself allegorically represents (148). Soon Righteousness and Peace join the debate, Righteousness siding with Truth, Peace allying with Mercy. Peace declares, “Mercy, my sister, and I should save mankind, / And that God has given and granted me, Peace, and Mercy, / To be man’s surety for evermore after,” a declaration that argues God’s mercy should be bestowed upon mankind even though he is undeserving (182-4). Following Peace’s words, Righteousness announces, “I, Righteousness, proclaim thus with Truth / That their pain will be perpetual, and no prayer can help them,” still holding to the truth and justice of God’s word that those who do wrong by him shall be punished (198-9). As Chew emphasizes, “God’s Justice and Truth [demand] satisfaction, [and] His Mercy and Peace [urge] forgiveness,” thus it seems the four have reached an impasse (qtd. in Gleckner 111). Seemingly, Langland’s original placement of the debate occurring during the Harrowing allows for the Four Daughters to reconcile and exemplifies the possibility of God as both merciful and just.

As the Harrowing begins, the Daughters represent the conflicting divine attributes that hinder the redemption and salvation of man from eternal punishment for sins. Deagman asserts that “[p]rior to the Harrowing of Hell, the Daughters seem to be irreconcilable aspects of God” since it appears God’s mercy and peace cannot compromise with his pledge for truth and justice to those who continually sin against Him (287). Robert Frank points out that the Four Daughters’ debate “teaches that, judged by a code of righteousness and truth, mankind deserve[s] to suffer in hell eternally. Only considerations of mercy and peace can urge his redemption,” a notion that probes the question—how *can* God be both merciful and just (93)? Ultimately, the sacrifice of Christ appears the only way to “save mankind and at the same time reconcile the claims of truth and righteousness with those of mercy and peace” (92-3); Christ’s death is the only way the opposing sides can compromise in the interest of mankind. In *Piers Plowman*, Peace explains “if they hadn’t known woe, they wouldn’t know joy,

/ For no one can know joy who has never suffered woe" (Langland XVIII.204-5)—perhaps the "they" Peace refers to suggests both mankind and God. For man to appreciate life and enjoy the worship of God, he has to suffer God's truth and righteousness when he sins. For God to enjoy his creation, he must suffer the anger and disappointment of his creation's wrong-doing as well as the death of his son Christ. Since Langland represents this deliberation allegorically, he can most advantageously demonstrate that God can be both merciful and just—"Langland's allegory brings the sisters back together after the harrowing to signify the possibility of reconciliation" (Deagman 287). Thus, Langland's use of the allegorical tradition of the Four Daughters and his unique placement of the debate during the Harrowing demonstrates that conflicting divine attributes can be resolved to offer forgiveness; perhaps the depiction of the allegorical figures as female also demonstrates the possibility of reconciliation.

Although Langland advantageously draws on the tradition of the Four Daughters and the Harrowing of Hell to exemplify his message, the convention of the Four Daughters as female also affects the understanding of the poem. Even though tradition has always depicted the allegorical figures of Mercy, Truth, Righteousness, and Peace as the "daughters" of God, there is no concrete reference to the femaleness or maleness of the four qualities in Psalm 84:11. Thus the notion that the characteristics are representatively female is a convention of tradition. Gillian Rudd conjectures the language of the passage of Psalm 84:11 "may well have provided the root of the tradition" (47); Rudd quotes the verse seemingly to point out that as Mercy and Truth *meet* and as Peace and Justice *kiss*, perhaps the choice of words is indicative of an inherent femaleness that has developed into the tradition of allegorical female figures. Rudd makes another interesting point highlighting Langland's accentuation in *Piers Plowman* that the allegorical figures are "sisters"—"Mercy, my sister," states Peace (Langland XVIII.182); "Sister, don't believe it," cries Righteousness (189). Rudd postulates that Langland's emphasis serves to establish "each of these aspects [that the Four Daughters represent are] closely related to the others," thus signifying the possibility of reconciliation (48). Rudd also suggests that the allegorical depiction of the figures as female creates the

“Other-as-female,” a notion that would in effect emphasize the maleness of God and the “Son of God [Christ]” and “His masculine, spiritual aspect” (50). Perhaps another explanation for the female allegorical figures is due to Mariolatry, a form of worship for the Virgin Mary that extends from van Maerlant’s *Merlijn* and the *Processus Belial*. Traver outlines three reasons why Mariolatry might have factored into the development of the female Four Daughters tradition—“worship [of the] ideal woman, . . . desire for symmetry, a new Eve to counterbalance Christ as the new Adam, [or the] longing for an intercessor whose interest would be for mercy without the necessity for thought of justice” (“FDG” 61). It seems her last suggestion most plausibly fits the scheme of the Four Daughters tradition; it is possible to discern a mirror image of the Daughters’ debate from the notion of an intercessor pleading for mercy on behalf of mankind facing God’s judgment. Therefore, depicting the allegorical figures as female in *Piers Plowman*, even as it follows convention, serves to signify also the possibility of God as both merciful and just.

Even though there exists a long tradition of the Four Daughters of God during the medieval period and before, William Langland’s allegorical poem *Piers Plowman* stands apart for several reasons. Aside from his everyday vocabulary and “plain” style, Langland incorporates the convention of the Four Daughters in a way that at once is easily comprehensible to the medieval laity while still engaging in big theological concerns and questions. How, asks *Piers Plowman*, can mankind receive God’s mercy when we are to be judged by His righteousness? Through the allegorical representation of conflicting divine attributes, Langland clarifies that there is a possibility of reconciliation between God’s mercy and justice, and that possibility comes from Christ’s death on the cross. Placing the debate during the Harrowing of Hell also serves to demonstrate this possibility, while heightening the seriousness of the concern of mankind’s salvation. Christ says, “I can still be merciful and just, and still maintain the truth of all my words” (Langland XVIII.386) to forgive mankind for his wrongdoing. Langland ends this portion of his poem quoting from Psalm 84:11, “Mercy and Truth have met each other; justice and peace have kissed” (419), exemplifying allegorically the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation mankind can receive from God,

as well as providing a model for the compromise of conflicting attributes that medieval Christians can practice.

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No Moor Stereotyping: Revealing the Humanity of Shakespeare's Aaron and Othello

BY
Noel Yucuis

During the same decade that Moorish Aaron terrorized the stage in *Titus Andronicus*, Queen Elizabeth I released a series of decrees advocating the deportation of “Blackamoores” from the empire (Habib 322). In a matter of a few years, the social standing of blacks in England morphed from mere political pawns in conflicts with European rivals, to the scapegoats of economic struggle for the lower classes, and finally, to the diabolical adversary of Christianity itself. However, the English archives provide limited records of this growing population (*Speaking* 102). Not only did the political and social issues surrounding blacks influence Shakespeare’s plays, but evidence also suggests that the historical writings of African Leo Africanus inspired the character of Othello (Whitney 476). Shakespeare carefully crafts his version of the Moor with three distinct purposes. As a political subject, his struggles are defined outside the English Empire, effectively critiquing the racial current of the day without fear of reprisal. As a literary device, the Moor is a foil against which we judge the racially charged and corrupt European characters of the plays. Moreover, as a narrative for the black experience, Shakespeare’s Moors have two distinct voices: one defies the very cultures that condescend and strip him of his humanity, and the other shows that subconscious “paranoia” about racial difference can be the source of the black man’s psychological unraveling (Nunez 194). In bringing these two dramatically different Moors to life, Shakespeare asserts that their race does not impugn their humanity; however, it does fundamentally alter their experience by becoming the obvious target that others latch onto for leverage.

Racial inequality in Elizabethan England originally branched from the Medieval “color-concept[s] and physiology” associated with bodily balance and mood (Deroux 88). According to Gail

Kern Paster, this obsolete tradition claimed that the human body had four distinct “humors,” consisting of “blood, phlegm . . . yellow bile, and black bile,” which held sway over one’s emotions (qtd. in Deroux 88). Additionally, Paster points out that physiology at the time connected black bile with “passions of melancholy and anger” (qtd. in Deroux 88). Thus, the color black itself became linked with negative emotions and the propensity to commit acts of evil (88). These notions were so widely accepted that even Shakespeare referenced color physiology within his plays, associating the moods of his characters, both good and bad, with fluctuating humors. Margaux Deroux elucidates, “Each colored humor could exert authority and influence over the other, shifting the balance of emotions . . . Interests in physiology, then, stemmed from a desire to *master* emotions and maintain the balance of desired power hierarchies” (original emphasis 88). These Medieval notions about the internal body would eventually extend to discriminatory perceptions about a person’s physical appearance.

Europeans transposed “power hierarchies” of color onto the minority groups with darker skin than their own. Thus, the notion that one must “*master*” one’s emotions morphed into the stereotype that “blackamoors” possessed abnormal levels of choler that had to be “controlled, dominated, purged, or cured” (Deroux 89). Presuming their complexion to be the external manifestation of an overabundance of black bile, white Europeans conveniently amalgamated the rich diversity and broad range of African and Middle Eastern ethnicities into the label of “Moor” (89). Though some modern critics have accused Shakespeare of propagating these intolerant stereotypes in *Titus Andronicus* and *Othello*, evidence within the plays alternatively posits racial stereotyping as a source of evil itself. In *Titus Andronicus*, for example, the nurse laments the birth of Aaron’s son as “[a] joyless, dismal, black, and sorrowful issue,” superimposing his dark complexion with Renaissance notions of humor imbalance (*Tit.* 4.2.66). However, Aaron directly challenges her offensive stereotyping: “. . . is black so base a hue?” (4.2.71). By defying preconceived notions of race, Aaron shows that his choler and villainy do not stem from his being a Moor but are the expression of his frustration and subsequent alienation from a society that undermines his humanity.

Not only was Shakespeare inspired to create Moorish characters that challenged antiquated notions of color, but England's gradual disenfranchisement of blacks created the political backdrop for their on-stage struggle. Shakespeare may or may not have been aware that Queen Elizabeth had Africans in her entourage, possibly gifts from either Robert Dudley or navigator John Hawkins (Habib 72). However, Shakespeare certainly knew it was commonplace for both royalty and the aristocracy to "keep ... as ornamental public exhibits people from localities and regions over whom the kingdom ha[d] dominion or ambition, as a symbolic advertisement of its power" (72). As Elizabethan England grappled to achieve naval supremacy, mariners commonly acquired black slaves along with other prisoners of war in their skirmishes with Spain and Portugal. A group of African prisoners were "especially useful to the queen," in 1596 (Bartels *Speaking* 106) when she twice demanded their deportation purportedly in lieu of the return of English prisoners (108). As a result of their political standing in England, according to Habib, "black people in the second half of the sixteenth century were seen but denied, known but unacknowledged, and more present than ever before but just as invisible" (65). Shakespeare will utilize the figure of the Moor on stage to bring his plight to the forefront.

Between the early years of her reign and the decade preceding her death, Elizabeth's attitude about Africans in the realm deteriorated even further. In the first of three progressive proclamations, Queen Elizabeth ordered that the "Blackamoors brought into the Realme... of which kinde of people there [were] all ready here to[o] manie... should be sent forthe of the lande" (qtd. in Habib 321). No longer were blacks political pawns in the ongoing negotiations with Spain and Portugal; their overwhelming presence in England, according to the Queen, was detrimental to the economy and welfare of her true citizens. Two years before her death Elizabeth commanded that all "Negroes and blackamoors ... most of [whom were] infidels having no understanding of Christ or his Gospels" be removed from the kingdom, claiming that they were a "great annoyance of her own liege people" (qtd. in Habib 332). Shakespeare will directly challenge the Elizabeth's stereotype of the irreligious Moor in *Othello* where he echoes the life of Christian convert Leo Africanus.

Since Queen Elizabeth was a great patron of the arts during the Renaissance, Shakespeare would not have blatantly criticized her policies in his most controversial plays. Instead, he sets his critiques of xenophobia, *Titus Andronicus* and *Othello*, in cultures seemingly far-removed from Elizabethan England. Shakespeare places Aaron within Classical Rome as a prisoner of war captured along with the Goths. Notably, Shakespeare's audience would have closely identified with the Roman Empire, believing the English Empire an extension of a similar tradition and history. Exploring this parallel, Bartels suggests, "Crisis occurs because at an arbitrary moment in history Rome attempts to lay down the law and postulate an ... ideal of cultural purity as crucial to its core" (*Speaking* 68). Alternately, Othello finds himself within Venetian society, a "valiant" military leader defending his surrogate community from the Ottoman Empire (*Oth.* 1.3.48). Several scholars conclude that "because Othello is a Moor, he inhabits a uniquely 'precarious' position within Venice: a 'cultural stranger,' who has lost 'his own origins' ... appear[ing]... literally and figuratively out of place ... [and] 'unable to grasp' 'Venetian codes of social and sexual conduct'" (qtd. in *Speaking* 156). Though Venice was considered one of the most racially tolerant locales during the Renaissance in terms of racial tolerance, the play's obvious delineations of racial difference and their perceivable effect on the human psyche serve as a thoughtful depiction of the Moor. Both Aaron and Othello unravel the stereotypes at work within their respective societies, and by extension, they critique the manifest racism in Elizabethan England.

As literary foils, Shakespeare's Moors create frameworks in which the audience can judge the characteristics and behaviors of the European characters that surround them. In *Titus Andronicus*, Aaron does not speak the entire first act of the play, demonstrating the Moor's alienation from the society in which he resides, his own history, identity, and humanity inconsequential to the body politic. Although his cunning appears to be the driving force behind the play's abhorrent violence, Aaron's role as villain is moreover the manifestation of the dehumanization he has suffered at the hands of white men. Thus, Aaron's machinations expose Tamora as the matriarch of Rome's corruption, Saturninus as the "headless," politician, and Titus as the "feeble-minded" emblem of a dying

tradition (*Tit.* 1.1.186-8). Parallel to Aaron's silence at the beginning of *Titus*, *Othello* opens without the Moor's voice but with white Venetians Iago and Roderigo plotting to besmirch Othello's stellar reputation (*Oth.* 1.1.68). "To pick up Othello's story," Bartels explains, "... in the volatile environment where the play insists we must, to view Venice's relation to the Moorish stranger in the here and now of Venice, is to recognize that the terms of that relation derive not only from the Venetians but also, as significantly, from the Moor" (*Speaking* 171). Othello must convince not only his new father-in-law but a council of city officials that he and Desdemona are both lawfully and willfully married. This episode illuminates Venice's underlying disparity between its true citizens and its incorporated outsiders, the catalyst for Othello's paranoia and gradual psychological unraveling. Spurring Othello's anxiety, Iago plants the seeds for him to question the intentions of his compatriots and new wife. Consequently, Othello's imbalanced psychological state misinterprets the corrupt Iago as a dedicated friend, the loyal Cassio as his enemy, and the faithful and loving Desdemona as a conniving whore.

In order to navigate the nuances of Aaron's character, one must uncover the origin of his angst. The audience first encounters Aaron along with the Goth prisoners at the mercy of Rome (*Tit.* 1.1.70), giving historical resonance to the black captives regularly acquired by the English Empire. That he is part of the Goths' royal entourage suggests this is not his first time in bondage. As a result of his servitude to the Goths and the Romans, Aaron lacks a history and religion of his own. Kate Lowe explains this deterioration: "The process of removing Africans to Europe in the Renaissance period served to rob them of... distinguishing features, taking away their old nuanced identities and providing them instead with new, one-dimensional European ones by labeling them all as 'black Africans'" (qtd. in Deroux 90). The societies in which Aaron lives give him just one defining characteristic: his blackness. Aaron thus revels in this one stable aspect of his identity, asserting that "Coal-black is better than another hue / In that it scorns to bear another hue" (*Tit.* 4.2.98-99).

Instead of equating blackness with villainy, Aaron's angst shows the Moor's refusal to be politically subjugated and his rejection of a destiny determined by any force other than his own. Even

though Aaron does not speak for the entire first act of the play, Shakespeare slowly brings Aaron out of his silence giving him the voice and intellect to unravel the corrupt society that denies his humanity. In the process of the play, Aaron spurs Chiron and Demetrius to attack Lavinia (2.1.115-7), stages the murder of Bassianus and frames Titus' sons, tricks Titus into chopping off his hand (3.1.187), and impregnates Tamora. Alternative to critics who view Moorish Aaron as a stereotypical personification of evil, Bartels postulates, "We start with a Moor whose barbarous behavior, though it may reflect the inherent violence and defining chaos of Rome, is signally different, enough that he can serve as an open dumping ground for displaced and disturbing disorders. His menacing presence may expose the darker side of Rome and by extension, England" (*Speaking* 68). At the end of the play, Aaron becomes the sacrificial scapegoat, allowing the remaining Romans to blame their own corruption on him. Unwilling to "repent," Aaron reminds the audience that the Other must never apologize for who or what society has essentially made him to be (*Tit.* 5.3.186-9).

In contrast to Aaron's villainy, *Othello's* tragic hero gives a platform for the voice of Leo Africanus, embodying the historical anxiety of race that accompanies a society's demarcation of difference. Lois Whitney posits that Shakespeare may have utilized Pory's translation of Leo's narrative as a source for Othello's rich African history. The first connection to Othello is Pory's description of Leo in the preface: "First therefore his Parentage seemeth not to haue bin ignoble," (qtd. in Whitney 477). This substantiates Othello's justification: "I fetch my life and being / From men of royal siege" (*Oth.* 1.2.21-2). Hence, Leo's birthright serves as inspiration for Othello's royal heritage. Additionally, Leo's "valiant" depictions of the peoples of Mauritania, Arabia, and Africa connect with numerous references to Othello's character in the play (Whitney 479-80). For instance, he is twice called "valiant" before the Duke and his council (1.3.47-8), the Herald in Cyprus hails him "our noble and valiant general (2.2.1-2), and Desdemona defends him to her father, saying "his honours and his valiant parts / Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate" (1.3.252-3). Significant parallels to between Leo's narrative and *Othello* also include "imminent dangers" that form the backbone

of Othello's history (qtd. in Whitney 478). Whitney suggests the most profound connection between the men is that both had been sold into slavery and converted to Christianity during their youth (478). Moreover, "not only do practically all the suggestions for the early life of Othello find their counterpart in Pory's ... *Historie* ... but ... almost every trait of his character as well" (483). Though Leo's history appears to be the building block for Othello's story, the most striking connection between the historical and fictional characters, Bartels suggests, is that they both possess an anxiety about their racial difference.

In Bartels' essay, she reveals the overlooked account of Leo's racial insecurity, closely linking the historical man with Othello's racial paranoia and eventual unraveling. She says that his *Historie* reveals "an author who seems ... to be securing his Christian, European self at the expense of his 'Other' identity as a Moor" ("Making" 436). Leo openly admits his trepidation: "When I heare the Africans euill spoken of, I wil affirme my selfe to be one of Grenada: and when I perceiue the nation of Granada to be discommended, then I professe my selfe to be an African" (qtd. in "Making" 437). Othello similarly wavers between the advantages of his African and Venetian heritages. Thus, the play's early conflict between Othello and his fellow Venetians demonstrates that the Moor's social status is precarious, contingent on political forces beyond his control. Iago easily manipulates Othello's instability for personal gain, leading the Moor into a slow descent into jealousy, despair, and the murder of his wife. Elizabeth Nunez concludes, "Othello, before he met Desdemona, was *pre-disposed* to the temptation of an Iago by the fact of his experience as a Black man in a white world ... [His] is the tragedy of a man who outside of ... his cultural milieu, is made to question his ability, his goodness, his character, because of the constant denial by others of his total humanity (original emphasis 194). In Othello's final soliloquy, he pleads: "Speak of me as I am. Nothing extenuate" (5.2.351). Speaking of Othello, one cannot ignore the psychological consequences of the Moor's uncertain place within the political and social spheres, his paranoia a product of society's fear of the Other.

Bartels suggests, "If to write the Moor into history was to produce the figure's identity, however conceived, as a matter of

'truth,' to stage the Moor was at once to bring that figure into form and draw attention to the process of forming ..." (*Speaking* 18). Shakespeare's creation of Aaron and Othello continue to demonstrate both the social and psychological repercussions of pigeonholing the Other. In a time where xenophobia was not only commonplace but propagated by the state itself, Shakespeare creates two multifaceted voices to represent the entirety of the black experience, an identity that must not be subdued by and for political ideologies at large.

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