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“Amen, Black Jesus”: Racial Redemption and the Black Christ Figure in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*

Stephen Foster Smith
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That religion and origin are both vital components of African American literature is an incontrovertible fact. Slave spirituals, slave narratives, and all African American fiction and non-fiction find their roots growing from the specific and undeniable seed of spiritual and genealogical influence. Assuredly, Christian theology underscores an ever-present discussion on colonization and liberation in the history of the early African Americans. The question of who will free slaves from the institution of slavery within early America perfectly grounds itself in the art of African American literature. Largely, liberation literature requested the help, wrath, and grace of God to free all who faced racial oppression. In 1929, Countée Cullen’s *The Black Christ and Other Poems* features a frontispiece illustrating a white Jesus Christ, crucified, above a black man hanging from an outstretched and drooping tree limb adorned with a crown of thorns. Cullen’s frontispiece and publication suggests that the reading of “the corporal text of terror against black Americans should be read alongside the crucifixion of a ‘white’ Jesus of Nazareth” (Whitted 379).

Although there is a strict rhetorical and cathartic purpose within the suggestion of how to read Cullen’s collection, the method seems unreliable and a bit stifling. The question remains, still, even through reading the text via a racially charged lens, of *why* there would be a suggested image of a black Jesus Christ? Is the image of a white Jesus Christ unworthy of liberating souls and bodies tarnished by years of bondage and conquest? Or is the image of a white Jesus Christ—recommended by the master narrative—naïve of, specifically, the plight of the African American? Understanding that “black liberation theology often involves holding a black image of Christ” gives way to understanding texts involving black Christ figures, such as Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*:

a text involving redemption and rebirth for African Americans (Calhoun-Brown 197). Throughout the novel, representations of Christian theology root themselves within the text, often lending events and biblical allusions to the entire cast alongside the themes of love and sacrifice. Many instances lace the story with an unavoidable biblical context: Baby Suggs' sermon in the Clearing—much like the Gospel of Matthew's "Sermon on the Mount"—the apocalyptic episode involving the Fugitive Slave Law, Beloved's sacrifice, and Denver and Sethe's Eucharistic engagement. Coupled with encountering biblical recreations, investigating the operation of love and memory and its effects on characters within the pages of *Beloved* bolsters a critical approach to unearthing heavy meaning within the novel. This grueling search for understanding involves a discovery of how sacrificial love and memory leads to racial redemption and the crowning of the black Christ figure. Certainly, *Beloved* has no ties to the controversial frontispiece of Countée Cullen's *The Black Christ* or its poetic content, yet the search for the black Christ figure and what it means within its pages is surely relevant to the idea of love and memory assuaging the trauma of slavery within *Beloved*.

In order to begin, the investigation of sacrifice as a technique used by certain characters in the novel to escape the cycle of their traumatic memory perfectly fits within gaining an understanding of *Beloved*. Architecturally, *Beloved* moves through a standard plot structure—beginning, middle, and end—yet there are several climaxes within the novel, all involving sacrifice. Beloved's exorcism during the finale of the novel hails as the second most surprising act of sacrifice, but one of the greatest needed. After rupturing the rhythm of the community for the second time, Beloved disappears into thin air with the help of the women in her Cincinnati community. The women who gobbled up the feast at 124 Bluestone Road the day before Beloved's murder fiercely castigate Sethe for making a landmark decision of rightful disobedience. These women, whose "black faces stopped murmuring" as Sethe exits to the wagon carrying her to jail, wonder "was her head a bit too high?" and, eventually, excommunicate her, causing her world to exist solely around 124 Bluestone road, her children, and her ghostly child (179). The same group of women who misunderstood Sethe's profile as she accepted her fate arrived at her home

to come together and cast out the human sacrifice that brought Sethe and her family out of slavery. Clustering around Sethe's property, the women "[search] for the right combination, the key, the code, the sound that [breaks] the back of words" and when they find it, their dissonance gives way to a magical, consuming force that washes over 124, cleansing it of Beloved and creating consonance within the broken community (308). While banning together, honoring Denver's request to rescue her mother, "standing alone on the porch, Beloved is smiling," but although Beloved's expression seems inappropriate, her smile is the assurance she finds knowing her work is complete. Beloved's return involved mending the minds and bodies of the community, not rejoining her family in order to bring harmony to a discorded unit. Beloved's return to the community in order to restore its livelihood not only makes her a heroine, but it, ultimately, crowns her as the black Christ figure.

In the context of Beloved's characterization as the black Christ figure, her arrival represents a second coming as she brings scads of apocalyptic trauma to the residents of 124. The question to ask may be: What does Beloved actually *do* for those in 124? Other than giving Sethe another mouth to feed, Beloved works as an agent who arrives to scrape the repressed, traumatic memories from the corners of the minds of not only Sethe, but Denver and Paul D as well, leaving none of their memories untouched. Beloved has the ability to become a priest-like individual, engaging those she contacts in confessional therapy. This seemingly simple process is dangerous, because by simply asking those she engages with to tell her their memories, she uncovers parts of their lives they would rather hide. Along with the institution of slavery, slaves not only toiled with back-breaking and fatal labor, but with memories of places and instances too horrible to recall. In order to lighten the heavy load of reliving these moments frequently, they worked to repress them, such as the characters in *Beloved*. While living with memories impacted under the constant stress of life, repressed memories cause an interruption in the mind's processes, and, in turn, the damaged mind rots; during the struggle to release the repressed memories, the individual becomes prone to outbursts, and even moments of complete paralysis. For the characters in *Beloved*, characters suffer from acute repression due to the horrors

of Sweet Home; therefore, Beloved's duty within the lives of these ex-slaves becomes necessary in order to gain freedom.

Before Beloved, Sethe, Denver, and Paul D all sporadically fall into situations where recalling Sweet Home becomes more than just memory, their recollections become reality. During a conversation with Paul D, Sethe answers him by revealing that her Beloved died "soft as cream," yet Paul D never asked Sethe about Beloved, only the death of Baby Suggs. (8). Denver, on the other hand, walks back and forth remembering bits and pieces of her birth story and childhood without any sense of connection between the disjointed parts. Paul D hints at tidbits of memories secret to Sethe: "except for the churn...and you don't need to know that" (9). Beloved's on-time arrival meets the characters with the right type of aid, and, if read closely, mirrors the act of repressed memory surfacing in an eerily yet graceful way: "a fully dressed woman walked out of the water" (60). The second coming came in style, but left naked and bearing as the memories she upheaves during the course of the novel.

Although Beloved's miraculous (re)birth becomes an interesting point within the pages of Morrison's novel, Beloved's confessional therapy becomes the most interesting part of *Beloved*. An ability to encounter individuals and encourage them to easily reveal all of which they work to erase makes Beloved's existence almost as interesting as what she does with these excavated memories. Beloved only works to have these memories uncovered and released from her confessors. She never counsels her subjects, absolves them, or turns them away with scripture and penance in toe; a simple unearthing is all she does. Why must Beloved provide no comfort for Sethe, Denver, or Paul D? The unwritten rule-of-thumb reveals itself in what happens after these individuals undergo Beloved's confessional therapy. All three find out what held them back from living-in-the-world for so long: What bound them to the earth in the first place—slavery. As Sethe, Denver, and Paul D release their unspoken traumas—Denver experiencing hers through a collective identity rather than actually, physically experiencing it—they begin to live life in a healthier way, without crammed minds and hard hearts.

From the talk therapy Beloved brings to 124 to the harrowing act of sacrifice between Sethe and Beloved, love serves as one

of the main ingredients in the novel's structure. Understanding how love functions between mothers and daughters calls for the examination of the first sacrifice of *Beloved*. Sethe and her children, rightfully, have codependency that warms courage far, deep inside of Sethe, but it does not crest until schoolteacher arrives to take his property back to Sweet Home. At this very moment, Sethe knows that she has to vacate her comfort zone and save her children from the danger of schoolteacher. Freeing her family from becoming victims of the fugitive slave law, Sethe murders *Beloved* and attempts to kill the rest. Framed in the event of the biblical apocalypse, schoolteacher and three men on horseback ride onto the property of 124 searching for what escaped Sweet Home: "When the four horsemen came—schoolteacher, one nephew, one slave catcher and a sheriff—the house on Bluestone Road was so quiet they thought they were too late" (174). The first lines of the chapter housing the greatest scene of Morrison's masterpiece set the stage for absolute chaos and war over who belongs to whom, what deserves recapturing and what remains for spoil. It is in this very chapter that sacrificial love names itself as the theme of *Beloved*. The grandiose language takes a shift into a sharp, darker tone in order to bring the event hailing love as the most critical emotion of the novel to the forefront. Quoting the societal voices of slave-owners and catchers, Morrison allows the horsemen to receive license to vocalize their thoughts while invading 124:

The very nigger with his head hanging and a little jelly-jar smile on his face could all of a sudden roar, like a bull or some such, and commence to do unbelievable things...A crazy old nigger was standing in the woodpile with an ax. You could tell he was crazy right off because he was grunting. (174-175)

Morrison lays the groundwork for *Beloved*'s murder to gain complete reception. With no promise of understanding, acceptance or appeal, Morrison's poetic masonry builds the bricks to house *Beloved*'s murder in a resting place within the theme of sacrificial love. The meaning of sacrificial love appears within the event of Sethe swiftly killing one of her children; her love will

not allow any of them to return to the horrors of Sweet Home. Here, Morrison completes the answer to the question of how love can transform into an evil so thick that it smothers and, when pressed thin, kills. The answer hides underneath the reason behind the infanticide: Sethe retaining her identity and freedom, and making the choice to bar her children from living as slaves. The memory of schoolteacher's terrorism allows Sethe to make the impulsive decision to kill rather than be at his service. Kevin Everod Quashie reveals the secret to understanding memory, he asserts that "memory is inherently a repetition, always in movement, always shifting, it operates via placement and position" (126). Regarding Sethe, Quashie's explanation of memory's function in *Black Women, Identity, and Cultural Theory* allows for Sethe's commitment to protecting her children to remain completely incontestable; adding to Quashie's evaluation of memory, note that memory is completely episodic, each episode involving more or less emotional association than the last. In Sethe's case, her "rememory" involves tremendous amounts of emotional weight, and when schoolteacher—the memory associated with the deepest pain—returns to rob Sethe clean of all she has, her love curdles, producing a new and hardened defense in retaliation to his attack: impulse.

Imperatively, understanding Sethe's impulsive reaction to the threat of a return to slavery leads to an understanding of how the sacrifice of Beloved is a redemptive quality amid its communal disapproval. The gruesome act startles the slave catchers and prevents them from commandeering Sethe and her children and exposing them to the horrors of Sweet Home. This acts as the first attempt of racial redemption, and as the act may not seem completely redeeming in the sense of positively recasting an individual, the act stops Sethe's loved ones from entering into the same cycle that caused her horrific, repressed memories. Therefore, the act of sacrificing Beloved in order to gain freedom characterizes Beloved as the sacrificial lamb, which enables her miraculous (re)appearance and healing ability.

Beloved's blood, shared between Sethe and Denver, also binds the women in an indelible cycle that can only break with the (re)birth of Beloved; this, too, acts as a unification of the race. Covered in blood and moving in silence, Sethe approaches 124 in order to

regain normalcy within her household. Performing the normal routine of breast feeding, Sethe lets “Denver [take] her mother’s milk right along with the blood of her sister,” which creates a bond that binds all three into a trinity of mother, daughter, and dead by way of a Eucharistic ritual (179). Recognizing how critical a parental agenda is to Sethe within this moment, this act of nursing requests understanding in the fact that Sethe finds the utmost importance in sharing her body with both Denver and Beloved in order to nourish them and keep the parental connection alive—such determination to give and maintain life points toward how important sacrifice is within *Beloved*. The passion Sethe possesses concerning maintaining the lifeline between her and Beloved echoes itself throughout Beloved’s second existence.

Aside from Sethe nobly upholding her motherly obligation to Beloved, the act of repression proves that even though she may desire to remain faithful to her children, Sethe possesses a harmful trait within her personality. Gloria Thomas Pillow invites scholars to see Sethe her way, labeling Sethe as an Eve figure who prefers denial. Pillow’s *Motherlove in Shades of Black* does not cast Sethe as a disparaging figure, but sheds light on a less-discussed side of her: “The story of Sethe is, like Eve’s, a universal and symbolic woman’s drama as well as a very personal story of one woman’s life” (105). Further, Pillow states that “an even more powerful defense than fantasy, denial requires no conjuring of what is *not*; it merely rejects what *is*” and, ultimately, Pillow is correct. Sethe does, in fact, deny most of her memory of Sweet Home—not in a sense that Sweet Home never existed—and condemns her memory, prohibiting it from exhausting itself healthily. In a poignant conversation with Paul D, Sethe shouts out “they took my milk!” after fragmented recollections of the hours prior to the foiled break from Sweet Home, displaying the dangerous effects of Sethe refusing to allow her memory expression so she can heal. Sethe introduces her children into a world rife with the antics of social injustice and depravity and attempts to sacrifice each and every one to avoid the touch of slavery. Sethe’s act seemingly outlines African Americans as animalistic and savage; however, below the surface, Sethe unknowingly works to redeem the race and declares that African Americans, freed or not, will not allow the institution of slavery to recapture them once they are free.

Though, majority of the novel, *Beloved* operates as a corporeal body, her efforts as a poltergeist open the novel and foregrounds her ability to hungrily tear apart any calm aspect of any life she encounters. Her paranormal activity evicts Sethe's boys, Howard and Buglar, and, surprisingly, provides Denver with comfort. Conversely, once her corporeal appearance demands the help of others to function, *Beloved* takes hold of all who know her and works to heal the places left sore by unforgivable situations. Aside from *Beloved's* preternatural (re)appearance, the important portion remains as she sets out on one mission: to help everyone remember properly. *Beloved* lives as the novel's ultimate black Christ figure; knowing pieces of life from the middle passage and the past of Sethe, coercing others into remembering bits of life they dared not to return to. *Beloved* works to not only historicize trauma, but to revisit it so much that its victims are purged of its sting. *Beloved's* purpose within the novel weaves the members of 124's community together and unbinds their minds, allowing the community to uplift one another and redeem themselves as free individuals full of love through her sacrifice. *Beloved* works on all minds and cracks open her own, eventually letting readers in on her time in the middle passage. *Beloved's* memory presents an intimate perspective of life in the middle of the African diaspora: "there will never be a time when I am not crouching and watching others who are crouching too...the men without skin bring us their morning water to drink...we can not make morning water...those able to die are in a pile...it is hard to die forever" (148-149). *Beloved's* fragmented narrative explores life during the Atlantic slave trade and though her fragmented section may seem as if it is only her story, in actuality, it is the story of many transported from the West African coast to the New World. Therefore, when *Beloved* revisits 124 she lives as a representative of the African and African American race seeking redemption for their suffering. Together, with atoning the traumatic lives of those affected by slavery, and, chiefly, absorbing all of Sethe's love, *Beloved's* memory magic and second sacrifice, once again, crowns her as the novel's Christ figure as she mends the broken pieces of 124's community.

Beloved's disappearance restores the community, the minds, and souls of those deeply ravaged by slavery. *Beloved's* ability to

draw together every single individual torn apart and separated by her murder—the confused, jealous anger of it, and the cause of it—outright solidifies her characterization as the novel’s black Christ figure, exclusively. Beloved returns, revolutionizes, and revitalizes all aspects of 124 and its surroundings, but, primarily, Beloved’s existence reminds those who know her of what remains at the heart of life: love and memory. In *Beloved*, through its powerful events and retellings of horror stories, love and memory live at the core. Love is the greatest emotion above all; memory is the switch that activates its power. Morrison’s *Beloved* is a reminder that time is the tool which measures love’s effects on its recipients and shows reciprocation as what allows love to share itself properly. Textually, *Beloved* works to undermine the notion that memory will instantly heal traumatic stress, as it states, “this is not a story to pass on,” yet it justifies the conclusion that memory, coupled with love, liberates those who live under the pain and suffering of years repressed (324). While understanding Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* as an historical showcase, there remains no contest to the fact that Beloved operates as a redeemer of the African American race, ultimately serving as the black Christ figure who can truly identify with the plight of the African American. Beloved treats memory as a variant of an exploratory tool, using its details and intricacies to burrow through the ravaged minds of the ones closest to her. Though Beloved possesses no specialty in any form of theology, her lessons of love and “rememory” act as a form of religious expression as she dutifully works to liberate her followers from the manacles in their minds. Beloved arrives once, arrives again, and hails as the novels black Christ figure with an agenda much greater than typically imagined.

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I Bet (Shr)you Didn't Know: An In-depth Analysis of Shakespeare's Language in *The Taming of the Shrew*

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According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a comedy is a genre of composition or a staged production “of a light and amusing character, with a happy conclusion to its plot . . . the ‘happy ending’ being the essential part.” It is generally agreed upon, by critics and scholars alike, that Shakespeare’s early composition *The Taming of the Shrew* falls into the category of a comedy (Bevington v). However, something that is not agreed upon is whether or not Shakespeare held true to the idea of a “happy ending”, and if so, how the final scene of the play fits into the “essential” happily ever after of Katherina and Petruchio.

A number of critics view the final scene as proof that Petruchio’s outrageous tactics have worked to subdue Kate’s shrewish tendencies; her true character has been suppressed by her patriarchal husband. Yet, at the same time, when considering the possibility of an ironic reading of the last scene, some critics argue that Petruchio and Kate have reached a compromise of understanding by the end of the play. In trying to find the answer to this debate, critics have often analyzed different scenes, analogies, intertextual connections, and parallels between different couples within *The Taming of the Shrew*. Yet, perhaps, the answer lies not in the major actions of the plot, but instead lies in the details of the language. In analyzing the etymologies of names, as well as the use of second person pronouns, the reader is provided with a more thorough understanding of Kate and Petruchio’s relationship and the meaning of the final scene, revealing their marriage to be one of an equal partnership rather than a patriarchal hierarchy.

One of the most widely debated aspects of *The Taming of the Shrew* is the final scene in which Kate gives her speech to Bianca and the widow. This scene is often cited by critics as evidence proving that Petruchio has successfully tamed Kate’s wild behav-

ior. She dutifully obeys her husband's demand to appear before him and praises his name to everyone present. Throughout this speech, Kate refers to him using excessively dramatic language such as "king," "governor," "lord," and "sovereign." She claims that he suffers through "pain" and "cold" in order for her to remain comfortable and cared for; therefore, she owes him the duty equal to that which a subject owes his lord. Kate concludes this memorable speech by placing her hand under Petruchio's foot as a sign of dutiful reverence (5.2.140-83).

Many critics read this speech and see a woman who has been subdued by Petruchio's taming. Adrienne Eastwood sees this scene, of Kate placing her hand under Petruchio's boot, as proof that Kate has fallen to the powers of patriarchy. Petruchio's tactics of depriving Kate of her basic needs have succeeded in coercing her to "bend her language, identity, and reality to suit him" (249). Kate has obviously been tamed by Petruchio, as the "shrew" at the beginning of the play would have stood up for herself and would not have abided by Petruchio's demands.

However, countering this argument is the claim that Petruchio and Kate reach a compromise of understanding by the play's conclusion. Yet in order to read the text in this way, Kate's final speech must not be taken literally. Brian Blackley offers up the explanation that after all three of the husbands requested their wives' presence; Kate must have realized that something unusual was going on. By this point in the play, she trusts Petruchio enough that she answers his request to appear. Once there, Blackley argues, Kate would have realized what the three men were doing, so she quickly took on the role and initiated her "exaggerated performance as 'obedient wife'" (57). Therefore, her final speech cannot be argued to depict the reality of her relationship with Petruchio.

A detailed study of the language within *The Taming of the Shrew* supports Blackley's side of the debate; rather than Kate succumbing to Petruchio's patriarchal forces of a hierarchical marriage, Kate and Petruchio find their "happy ending" required of the comedy by coming to an agreement where they are able to coexist in a mutual partnership.

One linguistic element pointing toward the aforementioned interpretation of the play is the etymology of Kate's name. In the character list preceding the text, the "shrew's" name is listed as

Katharina. Being the Germanic form of Katherine, Katharina is believed to stem from the Greek name Aikaterine. However, during the period of early Christianity, the name became associated with the Greek name “Katharos” meaning “pure,” which impacted the Latin spelling of the name changing it from “Katerina” to “Katharina,” the name given to Kate (Behindthename.com). Consulting the *Oxford English Dictionary*, two possible definitions of “pure,” and consequently “Katharina,” are “free from contamination; not mixed with anything that corrupts,” or “perfect.”

Transferring this information to the action of the play can reveal the real meaning behind Kate’s famous speech. If Kate is truly untainted, then her character must not have been altered by Petruchio’s schemes to tame her. She is still the same “shrew” in the last scene as she was at the beginning of the play. If the reader ignores the subject of Kate’s speech, and instead focuses on the staging and effects of it, Kate’s unwavering, and pure, character becomes more apparent. As Brian Blackley points out, not only is Kate’s lecture the longest speech in the play, but it is also given in front of most of the major characters. In this scene, Kate uses her oratory skills to assert her dominance over the other wives; she is not bowing down to the imposed conventions of patriarchy.

It could be argued that when writing the play, Shakespeare put little thought into the names of his characters and the fact that “Katharina” means “pure” and “untainted.” However, Kate’s name is not the only one with symbolic meaning. Petruchio, with this spelling, is not a common name, but taking into account the fact that there was no standardized spelling at the time that Shakespeare was writing, the spelling of Petruchio seems close enough to that of “Patrizio,” the Italian form of the name “Patrick,” to claim them to be one in the same. The name Patrick comes from the Latin “Patricius” meaning “nobleman” (Behindthename.com). It appears as though this is the name which Shakespeare intended for his character, as this description of Petruchio agrees with that provided in the character list of “a gentleman of Verona” (Shakespeare 5). Returning to the meaning of “nobleman,” the *Oxford English Dictionary* provides the expected definition of “distinguished by virtue of rank, title, or birth.” However, another definition provided is a person “having or displaying high moral qualities or ideals;” “intrinsically good.” If Petruchio is “intrinsic-

cally good,” as his name suggests, is it fair to claim too that he uses outrageous strategies of deprivation and coercion to suppress and subdue his wife? Based upon the meaning of his name, as well as the meaning of Kate’s name, it seems as though the interpretation of their relationship being one of mutual understanding and trust is more accurate.

Studying the use of second person pronouns can also have an effect on how the reader interprets Kate and Petruchio’s relationship, as well as the final scene of the play. The category of second person pronouns consists of “you,” “ye,” and “your,” as well as “thou,” “thee,” and “thy.” For the purposes of this paper, all of the pronouns beginning with a “y” will be referred to as “you” and all of the pronouns beginning with a “t” will be referred to as “thou.” Although seemingly archaic in a contemporary context, during the time that Shakespeare was writing, his audience would have been familiar with both of these sets of second person pronouns as well as the nuance of their different meanings.

In Old English, the second person pronoun “thou” was the singular form, while “you” was the plural form. However, around the 13th century, during the period of Middle English, “you” became the polite form of address when referring to both singular and plural subjects. It is likely that this shift in meaning was a result of the Norman Conquest and the subsequent French influence, which was imported to England as a result of the invasion. As the French have formal and informal second person pronouns of address, after the Norman Conquest, the English second person pronouns followed suit (Crystal and Crystal 450). Due to these shifting rules of address, second person pronouns were able to provide information regarding relationships, as well as social class.

Being the formal pronoun of address, “you” was used when speaking to acquaintances or when addressing someone of a higher social rank. In contrast, “thou” was used in an affectionate way when addressing an intimate friend or relative. However, “thou” was also used when speaking to someone of a lower rank, or as a way of showing contempt (Widdicombe 27). Although these were the general rules for second person pronoun use, there were a few exceptions. For instance, although participating in an intimate, familial, relationship, children would often address their parents as “you” as a sign of respect (Crystal and Crystal 450).

Another nuance of second person pronoun use, which Shakespeare's audience would have been aware of, is the ability for a shift in second person pronouns to denote a change in attitude, relationship or rhetorical speech act (Crystal and Crystal). Using this knowledge of second person pronoun use, in the context of *The Taming of the Shrew*, can reveal subtleties in Kate and Petruchio's relationship, giving evidence to the interpretation that they have reached a mutual understanding, which may go otherwise unnoticed by the contemporary reader.

One revealing example of shifts in relationship may be seen through Kate's use of second person pronouns when addressing Petruchio. When they first meet, in Act 2 Scene 1, both Kate and Petruchio greet the other using "you." Petruchio begins, "Good morrow, Kate, for that's your name, I hear" and Kate responds "Well have you heard" (2.1.182-3). However, while Petruchio immediately switches to "thou" the very next time he speaks and continues to switch back and forth throughout the play, Kate addresses Petruchio as "thou" five times throughout the entire play.

It could be argued that in immediately switching to "thou," and continuing to address Kate in this manner throughout the play, Petruchio is implementing one of his taming strategies. Being that there are contradictory meanings of "thou" (intimacy versus contempt, and friendship versus lord to servant relationship), one possible reading of this switch is that through addressing her as "thou," Petruchio is insulting Kate, insinuating that she is of a lower standing than he is. Laurie Maguire backs up this interpretation in her book *Shakespeare's Names*, with an analysis of the abbreviation of Katherine to Kate, which infiltrates the dialogue of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Maguire presents the claim that in using this shortened form of her name, Petruchio is demoting Kate from the status of aristocracy, to that of a commoner; servants are called "Kate," not the upper class (124).

However, Maguire also cites two additional Shakespearean plays where the name Katherine is shortened to Kate, but in these instances, she describes this as a sign of affection (123). So if Henry VIII and Dumaine can use "Kate" as a sign of affection, why is Petruchio any different? Besides denoting a difference in social class or power, the use of "thou" as a second person pronoun can also indicate an intimate relationship, such as between close

family and lovers. Contrasting Maguire's interpretation presented in the previous paragraph, Petruchio's switch from "you" to "thou," as well as his adoption of the name "Kate," may be viewed as an outward sign of his desire for an intimate relationship. David and Ben Crystal cite *Much Ado About Nothing* as an example of how switching from "you" to "thou" may be interpreted as a wish for intimacy. In the dialogue cited, from Act 4 scene 1, the initial use of "you" is said to be "tentative" and "proper." However, when attempting to develop an intimate relationship, Benedick switches to the informal pronoun; "By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me." Yet after being rebuked by Beatrice, in a sign of injured pride, Benedick returns to addressing her as "you" (451).

When turning to *The Taming of the Shrew*, the scene in which Petruchio and Kate first meet (2.1) reveals an identical pattern to that of Benedick and Beatrice. Petruchio proposes the creation of an intimate relationship with Kate by stating, "A combless cock, so Kate will be my hen" (line 226). Prior to this assertion of his desires, Petruchio had been using "thou," such as in line 224 when he exclaims, "put me in thy books!". However, after Kate rebukes his attempted wooing, Petruchio changes the pronoun to "you" when he pleads, "You must not look so sour" (228). Knowing how Petruchio's oscillating pronoun use can lend insight to his intentions while speaking to Kate can provide a more accurate understanding of his relationship with Kate. Looking at the passage quoted above, and given the information from the Crystal text on shifting pronoun use and its indications of altered relationships or rhetorical speech acts, it becomes apparent that in Act 2 scene 1, Petruchio is adamantly attempting to woo Kate. This discovery is important when looking back to the aforementioned debate concerning Kate and Petruchio's relationship by the end of the play. Based upon Baptista's actions in 3.1, where he agrees to let Tranio (as Lucentio) marry Bianca, it is clear that Petruchio only need ask Baptista's approval in order to marry Katharina; he does not need Kate to agree to the relationship. Therefore, all of the trouble that he goes through in trying to win Kate's affection in 2.1 is apparently unnecessary. These actions are unexplainable if Petruchio is a tyrannical husband attempting to tame his shrew of a wife. However, when considering the alternate interpretation of Kate and Petruchio becoming equal partners by the culmination

of the play, Petruchio's attempts at wooing can be explained in the simple fact that he honestly cares for Kate and wants to marry her. A patriarchal husband, who is after power and money, is not likely to be concerned with how his soon-to-be wife views him; however, an "intrinsically good" husband who desires a marriage of partnership and understanding is.

A second example of how the shifting pronoun use within *The Taming of the Shrew* can provide insight into Kate and Petruchio's relationship can be seen in Kate's use of "thou" when addressing Petruchio. Throughout the entirety of the play, Kate only addresses Petruchio as "thou" on five occasions. In four of these instances, Kate is using the pronoun in the sense of contempt. The first two instances occur in 2.1, when she is first introduced to Petruchio. Within this scene, the only two times that she addresses him as "thou" she is insulting him, such as "Go, fool, and whom thou keep'st command" (line 254). The other scene where Kate uses the pronoun in this way is 3.2. In this instance, Kate is upset with Petruchio because he will not stay to celebrate their wedding reception. These few instances are the only times where Kate does not address Petruchio as "you;" other than these scarce moments when Kate becomes upset, she always addresses Petruchio using the pronoun signifying distance.

However, there is one instance, other than the four discussed, where Kate uses "thou" to address Petruchio; this time, it is in a non-aggravated way. In 5.1, Kate says to Petruchio, "Nay, I will give thee a kiss" (line 140). In this instance, she is using "thou" in the sense of intimacy. This is the first and only instance in which Kate addresses him in this way. Being that this statement comes very near the end of the play, it suggests that over the time span of the plot, Kate has grown closer to Petruchio; she is now comfortable enough, and trusts him enough, to enter into this intimate relationship. This information also supports the conclusion that Kate and Petruchio reach a compromise of understanding because it would be unlikely that Kate would take this step towards intimacy after being tyrannically suppressed for all this time.

While there is enough evidence within Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* to adequately support two contradictory interpretations, a study of the language suggests otherwise. An analysis of the etymology of names and the shifts in second person

pronoun use, points to one interpretation being more accurate than the other. Rather than Petruchio dominating Kate in a marriage of patriarchal hierarchy, the evidence of Shakespeare's language points to Kate and Petruchio existing within a marriage of mutual understanding and compromise.

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The Bastards of History: The Eminence of Culture and Social Ethics in Quentin Tarantino's *Inglorious Basterds*

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Traditional: hardly a word describing the risqué, “nouveau modern” cinematic literatures that are Quentin Tarantino’s films. His talent of disguising controversial social and cultural issues within his action films is unique, and what could only be described as “nouveau modern.” “Nouveau modern” defines his ability to weave sub genres into his action films to form hybrid genres. These hybrid genres feed America’s hunger for entertainment, yet at the same time, function as documentaries. Instead of drowning viewers with a wordy documentary film or dry historic recount, Tarantino wheels his audience in with their love of action and violence to place social and cultural issues into their subconscious. Tarantino recreates history using a kind of “active history” method (which describes his recreation of history using violence and action as a tool to persuade his audience on the instability and unreliability of historical “truths,” by highlighting the probability of the film’s scenarios using justifiable reason based off the “truths” available to us in history books). Tarantino uses “active history” as a buffer to introduce controversial subjects such as: religion, politics, and sexual taboos. His 2009 film *Inglorious Basterds*, centers on the events that occurred in 1940 in Nazi-occupied France. The actors who play historic characters, as well as Tarantino’s penciled in ones, are the key to the success of recreating history how Tarantino sees it. Erving Goffman, an American sociological theorist of the twentieth century, believes the true success of a film, play, etc. lies in the actor’s performance. He states, “Actors attempt to convey to an audience a particular impression of both the actor and the social scene. Through the use of scripted dialogue and gestures [...] actors create a new reality for the audience to consider” (Goffman 249).

In order to recreate history, the pieces have to connect logically; and, if the actors do not believe the reenactment, then the film cannot complete its task. Tarantino's 1995 film *Pulp Fiction* debuted his talent for weaving social issues into an action film. *Pulp Fiction* was riddled with taboo issues and sensitive subjects such as: homosexuality, religion, and racism. As stated before, Tarantino's unique combination of poetic dialogue, satirical humor, and violence functioned as a buffer to disguise these controversial issues with humor and action so to maintain the audience's attention.

The poetic scripts of *Pulp Fiction* and *Inglorious Basterds* forecast the mood and emotion of the film before the action commences. His signature opening scene involves two or more characters engaging in a long, wordy, yet mundane conversation. This allows dialogue to become the focus of the feature while, at the same time, provides a disclaimer that the action in the film will underplay language fluctuations and dialogue. Several of his cast members stated that his scripts are poetry. Christoph Waltz, who played Lt. Hans Landa in *Inglorious Basterds*, said in an interview with Charlie Rose that, "[Tarantino] is a poet" (*Charlie Rose*). In the opening scene of *Inglorious Basterds*, Nazi Lt. Hans Landa (nicknamed the "Jew Hunter") converses with a dairy farmer about the Jews, where we learn Hans has come to his home to track down a missing Jewish family. A few things occur in this scene. First, Hans (German) speaks the Dairy farmer's language: French. Tarantino wants his audience to become aware of a few points just with Hans's language switch. Tarantino needs the film to be as realistic as possible with Hans having to speak the Farmer's first language, but he also wants to highlight Hans's level of intelligence. Tarantino also wants the double entendre of Hans literally speaking the farmer's language and figuratively speaking the farmer's language—in order to explain to him the purpose of his visit. In an attempt to seduce the dairy farmer and win his hospitality, Hans continues speaking the romantic language to transpose his character, in Nazi uniform, to a friendly stranger who has arrived for a visit. In the opening scene, the audience observes how language allows Hans to transpose character without a wardrobe change because the dexterity of language yields flexibility to instantly alter the atmosphere—shifting the audience's reality.

Goffman believes that in a scene like this Hans's character is asking the audience to "believe that the character they actually see possesses the attributes he appears to possess, that the task he performs will have the consequences that are implicitly claimed for it, and that, in general, matters are what they appear to be" (Goffman 249).

As Hans tosses around pleasantries to the farmer and his family, the tone of the scene remains pastoral and friendly, because sunlight enters the home through the door. Goffman suggests, "those who use [...] setting as a part of their performance cannot begin their act until they have brought themselves to the appropriate place" (Goffman 251). When the door closes and the farmer and Hans are at the table with a single, small light lighting the entire room (simulating an interrogation room), only then is Hans able to begin his intimidation methods. Hans asks the farmer to converse from French to English, and we later discover that Hans desired to speak English because he was sure French-Jews were listening to their conversation and did not want share their conversation with them. But for performance purposes, Hans desired to speak English in order to transpose back into a Nazi Lieutenant and taint the dairy farmer's atmosphere, making it foreign to him in his own home. When Hans begins speaking English, Tarantino demands his English speaking audience's attention on Hans's physical performance. Hans's language shifts highlight his ability to transpose between cultures, as well as his ability to read scenes and adapt. When Hans and the farmer speak French, subtitles hinder English-speaking audience's full attention. The impact of other languages on English-speaking audiences renders emotions of displacement and can cause one to feel foreign in their own country. The subtitles are purposefully distracting to point out Americans' ignorance of other languages and cultures.

In an effort to persuade the dairy farmer about the genocide of the Jews, Hans compares the Jew to the rat and the German to the hawk. Hans expresses his ability to think like a Jew, stating, "the world a rat lives in [is a] hostile world. There are so many places it would never occur to a hawk to hide [...] and] I'm aware of what tremendous feats human beings are capable of once they've abandoned dignity."

Immediately following, Hans says to the dairy farmer that his “job dictates” that he must bring his soldiers in and conduct a thorough search of his home, and that a reward for any information will be that “[his] family will cease to be harassed in any way by the German military during the rest of our occupation of your country.” When Hans indicates that his job, as a duty to his country, obligates him to use force and violence, this introduces the dynamic of violence in the film. His statement provides structure for violence, which gives the audience a small sense of comfort in witnessing it because the violence is not in cold blood. This rationalization allows us to see the Nazis as humane, rational thinkers instead of “mass-murdering maniacs.” The moment Hans and the farmer begin to speak English, three cultures coexist in the room: German, French, and American. Because America operates according to the same logic that Hans expressed, even the most hated Nazi appears to be a humane, civilized person with rational thoughts because American, French, German and every culture in the world operates using the same system of law and consequence. It can be argued that America pushes its values onto other countries because America’s code of ethics is based on Christian religion, which is historically notorious for forcing other cultures to adopt its values. Tarantino wants his audience to perceive violence as a consequential outcome for unlawful/immoral behavior. This essay will explore the reliability of signs and language, and how both connect to the translation of culture—which indirectly relates to the process by which American society demerits unacceptable behavior based on their own contradicting moral standards.

Action film is a genre where one or more heroes are thrust into a series of challenges to achieve some kind of victory using physical efforts and violence—a fact that properly categorizes *Inglorious Basterds* as an action film. However, differentiating from his peers’ action films, the blood-shed in Tarantino’s hybrid action film is best described using the term “aestheticization of violence.” This high-culture/high-art use of violence in film and other media is what Indiana University Film Studies Professor Margaret Bruder describes as a “stylistically excessive” depiction of violence in film illustrated in a “significant and sustained way” (Bruder). Before *Inglorious Basterds*, Tarantino’s track record of film generated from the film noir era. Film noir is a cinematic theme popular in the 1940’s

and late 50's, which expressed a somber, down-beat emotion to the viewer, reflective of the "Cold War" period when America was filled with emotions of fear, mistrust, bleakness, despair, and paranoia due to the threat of nuclear war. Tarantino incorporated emotions of film noir into his action films as a trope, which symbolizes the tinge of moral conflict, futility and sense of injustice in America today. And like any work of art, the "work of art has meaning and interest, only for someone who possesses, the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded" (Bourdieu).

Violent, "hard-boiled" anti-heroes like the character Jules (an African-American assassin) in *Pulp Fiction* is an example of the heroes/moral "do-gooders" in his films and a popular character of noir films. Before Jules would assassinate anyone, he would quote the Bible verse Ezekiel 25:17: "And I will execute great vengeance upon them with furious rebukes; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall lay my vengeance upon them" (King James Bible). However, Jules did not quote the verse verbatim. Tarantino's tailored version contains remnants of the Bible verse, with the majority of the verse rewritten to present the historical text as Jules sees it:

The path of the righteous man is beset on all sides by the iniquities of the selfish and the tyranny of evil men. Blessed is he, who in the name of charity and good will, shepherds the weak through the valley of darkness, for he is truly his brother's keeper and the finder of lost children. And I will strike down upon thee with great vengeance and furious anger those who attempt to poison and destroy my brothers. And you will know my name is the LORD when I lay my vengeance upon thee. (*Pulp Fiction*)

The important factor here is Jules's sense of entitlement to rewrite the Bible. Since the beginnings of America, violence has removed the Native Americans, has brought and kept slaves in America, has caused civil wars, has inspired the invasion of Normandy and so forth. So, American history taught Jules that Americans have the right to kill so long as it is with good reason. The irony of Jules's statement is in the line, "The path of the righteous man is beset on all sides by the iniquities of the selfish and the tyranny

of evil men.” Americans are the tyrannical evil men that do not “shepherd the weak”; instead, they “strike down [...] with great vengeance” on those who are evil. Reciting his version/interpretation of the bible comforts Jules because it is a reminder of his duty as an American to eliminate evil (people who have wronged his boss). Yet, his words let his victims and the audience know that he dictates life and death, not God.

Like Americans, Germans boast their patriotism and sense of superiority. In the rendezvous scene with Bridget Von Hammersmark, the film has the task of translating German into English with subtitles. Translations are sensitive and can be complex because the translator must not deprive the foreigner the elaboration of meaning that can be lost with sayings and slang specific to a culture. Because of this, American and German culture can be complex. Both cultures do not allot foreigners the luxury of the formal authority of language, because each culture has clannish sayings and gestures similar to a password that only a true citizen would know. When British officer Lt. Archie Hicox posed as a Nazi officer to meet with Von Hammersmark, he gestured the bartender for three drinks using his index, middle, and ring finger. Even though we learn the British officer is linguistically fluent before the rendezvous, his cultural sign language is not. His study of the language, and perhaps the culture, will never brand him as fluent because he will never be truly involved in culture. Unbeknownst to him, an authentic Nazi officer found him out because he did not gesture using the “German-three” which is done with the thumb, index, and middle finger. The Authentic Nazi officer did not tell Lt. Archie Hicox where he went wrong, so as not to give away a secret to an outsider. He simply told him that he gave himself away. Von Hammersmark (German born spy for the Americans and Britain) was only able to pinpoint the moment the plan went astray because she is an authentic German working for Americans. Von Hammersmark revealing the “German three” to the Americans proves to the audience that she is against the Nazis. She told Aldo that, “any other looks odd.” It is equally important that the film shows Stiglitz’s merciless killings of the thirteen Gustapo officers because Stiglitz, matching the intensity of the Basterd’s as he killed the Nazis, is culturally congruent. Anything less would seem odd to Americans. Even before this dead giveaway, the lower ranking

soldiers and the Nazi officer remained skeptical of Lt. Archie Hicox's authenticity because of the way he enunciated the language. The Nazi soldiers were unable to differentiate Lt. Archie Hicox from another ranking officer because he was dressed as a Nazi. The cultural signs and language are important because they are the only reliable markers differentiating one culture from another. It is important that Diane Kruger (Von Hammersmark), as an actress, and Til Schweiger (Hugo Stiglitz) be native Germans, because their accents are important for the audience to believe them as German natives in order to consider them double agents. Jonathan Culler, author of *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, says that, "Identity is based on personal qualities with the best fit into a culture that shares at least 90% of one's personal qualities" (Culler 109). When Aldo says that Stiglitz left the Nazis and became American, he was not referencing Stiglitz's citizenship process, but instead that Stiglitz shared beliefs with the Basterds. Albert Blumenthal's study of the nature of culture talks about "Spurious Sociological Nominalism." This title refers to the idea that "there are no such things as whole groups of cultural minds. There are cultural groups made up of non-interfunctioning cultural minds and those made up of interfunctioning cultural minds." The idea of individuals within a cultural group having the ability to determine their status in culture supports Blumenthal's theory that "All groups of cultural minds are totality-groups" (Blumenthal 881).

Lt. Archie Hicox was able to persuade the questioning Nazi officer that his accent was a result of his native village in the mountains of Germany, because culture has the ability to break into subcategories. The Jewish-American soldiers, as well as Raine (Tennessee breed with a matching southern accent), spoke the same language but with varied accents. The Basterds' accents ranged from: deep-southern accent with a tendency to drag words out on the end and merge syllables, thick Boston accents with the tendency to pronounce "o's" like "a's," as well as what a pedestrian American civilian would call an American accent—a correct pronunciation of American English without the hint of an outside origin or lazy pronunciation. In reference to linguistic signals, accents attach culture to a character, and culture separates even the Jews into different subcategories. If one of the Basterds with a Boston accent were to travel to Mississippi, native Mis-

Mississippians would recognize him as a foreigner simply based on the way he enunciated his words. The identity of each character is designed to redirect attention from their actions and focus on who they are as people for the purpose of inviting the audience inside the psyche of each character through linguistic and cinematic signs. When a person relates to a character, that person draws on key physical and characteristic elements to connect them with a larger ideal in order to pass judgment on a person. Lt. Aldo Raine's voice triggers the audience's subconscious. The viewer will unconsciously scan a list of mental data to decide how to interpret his character. American audiences need Aldo's Apache heritage and thick southern accent—because the south is known for its distinct culture and history unique to the United States—in order to wholly trust his point of view and respect him as a leader. When we hear Aldo's thick southern accent, we automatically begin digging through American history and our associated knowledge to pin stereotypes, temperament, culture, prejudices, etc. to his character as prerequisites for determining how we want to perceive him based on his anthropologic resume. It is important for the film's success (in regard to the audience's experience) that this sequence occurs because it discloses how the audience perceives the film from the inside out. In another interview with Charlie Rose, Tarantino expressed that he likes the idea of making the movie everyone's personal movie; therefore, he purposefully inserts ambiguity so that each member of the audience relies on their personal experiences, emotion, and moral compass to interpret the film and take what they want from it. Aldo has a rope burn on his neck. Tarantino wants the audience to fill in the character's past using the signs present in the film.

The film forces the reader to fill in the blanks with many aspects of the film; however, some elements are simplistic. Characters like Shoshanna are simplistic characters with whom the audience can relate. The film begins with Shoshanna's escape, and then the film follows up on her life later in the film because the film suggests she survives. Shoshanna's background and personal struggles are necessary to draw audiences' empathy for Shoshanna's character. The more we learn about Shoshanna and the more we witness her being harassed, the greater our hatred grows towards the Nazis, and, because of Shoshanna's back story, the film lures the audience

into supporting Shoshanna's radical plan to burn the Nazis and commit suicide. The film feeds the audience their own subconscious need for a violent revenge against the Nazis, which forces them to question their own ethics. Blankenship considers the film a clever role reversal that traps the audience into confronting their morals:

If we feel excited to see Hitler and Goebbels get assassinated by Basterds, or if we cheer as the Germans on the cinema floor get shot from the balcony, then we are behaving just like the Nazis as they watch their propaganda film [...] We have to be so thirsty for revenge that we can feel ourselves applauding for our movie just like Nazis applaud for theirs. A film that creates that kind of parallel is not just a collection of genre homages and fight scenes. It's a sophisticated insight into how the hive mind affects us all, no matter which side we're on. (Blankenship)

Blankenship confronts the contradictory nature of America's morals, and the mirror Tarantino sets up for every person in his audience to have a unique experience from the film causes one to look upon themselves to pinpoint how or why they contribute to Tarantino's view of the world.

By committing the same crimes as the Nazis, the Basterds are not differentiating themselves from the evil they wish to destroy. In order to highlight the contradicting moral standards of America, Tarantino flips the scenario to the American's as the violent figures in the film and violence by the Nazis is limited to one scene. Considering the audiences' knowledge of the Holocaust, the film does not wish to portray the Nazis as cold-blooded killers, but rather a group who share similar goals of America. The only murder the audience witnesses is in the beginning of the film when the German soldiers shoot through the dairy farmer's floorboards where Jews hide. Yes, this was a violent act, however, the purpose of this scene was to gain the audience's trust that the film's historic recount happened as it says it happened. Tarantino is aware that the audience will bring their general knowledge about the Nazis to the theatre, and that structuring this act of violence in the beginning of the scene will win the audience's trust

from there on out. The larger goal of this scene is to show the act of violence without the bloody reality. We simply assume the Jews are dead because the dairy farmer cries and Shoshanna (who was hiding in another section under the floor boards) runs away. The focus of the feature is to show the raw reality of violence that the Americans commit. The flipped scenario is that the Basterds wish to carry out a counter genocide of the Nazis, because their actions against the Jews are immoral and inhumane.

We are introduced to the Basterds immediately following the opening scene, yet, one scene ahead of Hitler's introduction. This scene is vital for the audience to view Lt. Aldo Raine in parallel to Adolf Hitler. Lt. Raine's speech and personality share a few common factors with Hitler. The Jewish Basterds stand before him in a single file as Caucasian-American Lt. Aldo Raine addresses them as follows:

My name is Lt. Aldo Raine and I'm putting together a special team [...] I need [...] Jewish-American soldiers [...] we're going to be doing one "thang" and one "thang" only, killing Nazi's. [...] I sure as hell didn't come down from the God-damned Smoky Mountains [...] to teach the Nazi's lessons in humanity. Nazi ain't got no humanity. They're the foot soldiers of a Jew-hating, mass-murdering, maniac and they need to be destroyed.

The intersecting storylines in the film are strategically placed to construct the viewer's thought process for them. Before we are introduced to Hitler, Aldo appears ahead of him, allowing us to view Aldo in parallel to Hitler. The structure of back-to-back introduction forces the audience to compare the two leaders of the film. The design highlights the equal amount of power Hitler and Aldo have over their subjects, the tyranny of their non-negotiable guidelines and objectives, but more importantly, this directs readers to look upon Aldo as a mass-murdering maniac. Aldo's speech reminds the audience about the Nazi's objective. However, after we learn of Aldo's purpose, Hitler's purpose alongside Aldo's seems almost identical and therefore hypocritical on Aldo's part. Aldo and Hitler both desire to eliminate a specific group of people. Like Hitler, Aldo is not Jewish and differs from

his troops, and Aldo is a Nazi-hating mass murdering maniac with foot soldiers whom follow his command.

The Basterds wish to kill the Nazis using an “Apache revenge” type warfare, including (stereotypical behavior of the Native Americans) scalping each Nazi they kill and their own touch of engraving swastikas into the foreheads of the Nazis they temporarily set free as an intimidation method and also to make sure that people can spot a Nazi out of uniform. The Basterds are aware that without signs, it is difficult to identify people as a part of a particular culture. Stereotypes about characters in the film are addressed as cultural markers because stereotypes and rumors, as Hans stated in the beginning of the film, “can be so misleading. Rumors, true or false, are often revealing.” Aldo’s nickname, “The Apache,” helps us view him as a Native American because a nickname reveals something about a person’s character. When the audience sees the Basterds scalp the Nazi soldiers, it draws them back to Aldo’s introductory speech. Aldo claimed that, “Nazi ain’t got no humanity.” If Aldo did not have the nickname “The Apache,” audiences might not pair his actions with his statements. Native Americans were viewed by colonizers as “savage” and “inhumane” because of their primitive lifestyles and war methods of dismembering and mutilating their enemies’ bodies. The gruesome torture of beating Nazis to death and the humiliation of scalping, cinematically show compassion for the Nazis. According to American morals, the Nazis deserve to be killed in order to cease their sins against the Jewish people, but the use Native American methods force us to view Aldo and the Basterds as savages—except with reason. The intensity of the Basterds, in all of their efforts to annihilate the Nazis, is for the viewers because this is a revenge film; and Americans assume that the Nazis killed Jews with the same intensity; however, Tarantino does not give us Nazi savagery.

After witnessing the scalping, Aldo calls over German officer Sergeant and western type stand-off music commences to play as the sergeant walks alone toward Aldo, and the film moves into slow motion, suggesting that he is pacing towards death. He then salutes Aldo in respectful military politeness. The film desires the viewer’s compassion for the sergeant because he is shown “respectfully refus[ing]” Aldo’s request to share information about

the Nazis. Because the sergeant understands the consequences of refusing, the goal is for viewers to identify with his actions and see him as an honorable and brave figure because of his patriotism. The film also comprised sympathy for German war hero Frederick Zoller, despite the number of people he killed. The film also wants audience compassion for Zoller. Introducing Zoller to audiences outside of warfare helps the film do so. Zoller is polite and friendly towards Shoshanna. The purpose of introducing Zoller in uniform and with manners is to persuade viewers on the humanity of the Nazis. Further, the film shows Zoller's shyness about being a war-hero and his disgust with the violence that took place while he was at war. In America's current time of war with the Middle East, Americans relate Zoller to an American soldier back in the United States from Afghanistan, who may have killed the same amount of people as Zoller.

Tarantino purposely does a close-up shot of the scalping of Nazi soldiers and draws out the scene where Aldo engraves a swastika into Hans's forehead (along with his chilling wails) to add a cringe factor. Instead of Americans receiving the role of murderers as an insult, many critics found the film's playful vengeance as a psalm for the American man. Mark Blankenship (Huffington Post) believes that the film makes it easy for us to cheer for murder and praise vengeful death because the victims are who America considers immoral, therefore deserving of such punishment. Simply inserting reason and rationale into the equation pushes culture to view the savage violence as inherently good; but at the same time, Tarantino does not give the audience the luxury of saying the Nazi's violence toward the Jews is not based on reason with motives to create a better world—the same motives as the Americans.

Structuralism defines society's need to categorize and compartmentalize, and in respect to this method America must identify opposites. In order for America to be the "good," they must recognize an "evil" to define themselves against. In order for Shoshanna, the Bastards, and every contributing character in this film to commit their personal evils, they needed to personally rationalize their evils as inherently good. The complicity, or lack thereof, of society is the societal need to organize. As a result, individuals lose distinctive differentiating qualities and fall victim

to the process of “people, in a word, becoming things,” or the term: reification (Barry 151). Shoshanna’s character demonstrates the cultural/societal demand for one to “keep it together” in situations, and how one isn’t allowed their emotions, but only the ones selected for you. Culler believes that, “Identity is the result of certain actions [...] Identity is a failure, [and that] the internalization of social norms always encounters resistance [...] and we do not become who we are supposed to be” (114). A director’s ultimate goal with film is to persuade. Several directors like Tarantino aspire to represent God’s point of view. In retrospect, one could say that Tarantino recreates the past in hopes of a better future, or could go so far to say that his affairs with sadistic, controversial issues are a result of his failure to become who he was supposed to become, and his films are the reality of this result.

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[Sa] *Vie en Rose*: The Obtainment of Agency within Transgressive Marriage Models and Transgenderism

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A plump brown teddy bear, dressed snugly in a tuxedo, stares blandly at the two children as they hold hands and exchange vows in a room dangerously close to their mothers. Love, of course, is not the issue, but the fact that poor Ludovic Fabre sports a taffeta night-gown more beautiful than any of his mother's and a cotton-candy coated lipstick that floats more easily on his lips than ever before; this, of course, is coupled with the fact that the dress belongs to Jerome's deceased sister. These morbidly curious details still do not reference the true countertraditional elements inherent in this child-marriage; it is, instead, the fact that Ludo was born a boy, a boy that now is wearing a wedding dress and earrings. So begins Ludovic's transcendence into the magic realism of Alain Berliner's 1997 film, *Ma Vie en Rose*. Ludovic's desire is not to merely defy his biological gender assignment, but to create a new society in which a formal marriage between a girl-boy as it were and between a boy can occur, and in actuality be celebrated. In contradiction to conventional modes of the comedic marriage plot, Berliner's film subsumes the complex implications of defying traditional gender assignment that compose both the marriage plot and the marriage contract; as such, the formal narrative structure of the film and marriage plot work against notions of reality to propel Ludo into a world unscathed by the institution of convention or heterosexist repression that allows for the legitimacy of his sexuality and marriage.

Ma Vie en Rose initiates a dialogue with both the theoretical tenets of gender and the synthesis of heterosexual power differentials upon transgendered and homosexual individuals. A reading of the film's use of the marriage plot engages this commentary to extend into a dialogue concerned with how

sexual identity is both espied and exploited within marriage and its public presence/importance. Focusing the center of the film on both gender and the abject as they are defined by Kristeva and Butler is vital to understanding the gender conflict within the film; however, *Ma Vie en Rose* presents a world where both social and personal acceptance is completely confined to a public recognition of marriage. As such, these texts must be read in conjunction with theorists such as Carole Pateman and Northrop Frey. Ludovic's transformation into a sexually abject being forces him to not only deconstruct and subvert traditional models of marriage, but also requires him to adhere to and rely upon them for modeling purposes. With this, I intend to explore such modes of marriage within the text and how they work both to inform Ludovic's sexual identity and to censure it. As the marriage of Hanna and Pierre works as the primary reinforcement for the film's traditional marriage plot, Ludovic utilizes his parents' marriage as a model on which to base his fantasy marriage with Jérôme, inherently reinstating the traditional marriage plot; however, to utilize Butler's terminology, the film works to disidentify Ludovic's transgenderism and create a non-traditional marriage plot that contradicts the contract upheld by society and outlined by Carole Pateman.

However, disregarding sexuality or gender performance as either innate or regulatory leads to a constructivist psychology seeking to envelope queer agency or queering ideology into a power differential synthesized by the heterosexist worldview. As this text provides a theoretical lens through which to approach transgenderism within the film, Butler's musings on transgender representations in cinema allows further analysis on the either heterosexual or homosexual tenets of Ludovic's marriage to Jérôme. Dressed in Jérôme's deceased sister's gown, Ludo constructs a marital ceremony that seemingly outlines and adheres to all traditional marriage contracts, all the way up to the vicar that is, unfortunately in this case, a teddy bear. However, this marriage is under attack long before its consummation or even its close; the scene is immediately disrupted and subverted once the children's parents arrive, leaving this marriage not only defunct, but now hovering along the border of morbidity. This morbidity, although strong enough to completely deconstruct any

semblance of legitimate marriage, is not, at least in the viewer's mind, what makes this marriage illegitimate. Butler asserts in her book *Undoing Gender* the transgender experience in constant fracture; altering from a complete identification as either female or male, the person must scramble amidst realizations of her/his physical or corporeal sexual identification, especially in film (Butler 142). Altering from representations of the male to female transgenderism being emphasized or exposed by quick shots of a tampon search or a readjustment of the genitalia, film can force the viewer to confront the actual sex of the character and inherently view any transgender, heterosexual partnership as homosexual.

However, how does this film portray actual sexuality? Are we to assume this a heterosexual partnership, or is the viewer confronted more often with reminders of a carnal contradiction, inherently inducing a homosexual reading? The disidentification found in this film is primarily inherent in the caprice offered by Jérôme's mother upon her realization of Ludovic as transgender. As Jérôme's mother faints, she blatantly fractures the marriage between her son and Ludovic while reinforcing Ludo's sexuality to the viewer as male; as such, the viewer is now faced with a homosexual marriage between two males. By enhancing this scene with morbidity and a fracturing of gender alteration, the film takes great care to ensure the viewer's notice of the biological sex of each participant in this marriage, calling closer attention to the illegitimacy, as traditional marriage would contend, that this marriage holds. With this, what are the repercussions of a marriage between two men on the larger, theoretical aspects of the film's subject matter? By withholding the expected and desired heteronormative outcome, the viewer is forced to confront the reality of homosexual unions, and the inherent power dichotomy subverted therein.

The marriage between Ludo and Jérôme is deemed illegitimate also by way of the very logistical inconsistencies provided in the ceremony itself. While Ludo and Jérôme have access to a teddy-bear that can serve as vicar, they fail to possess witnesses and inherently place this marriage ceremony as completely irrelevant to or void of traditional marriage legitimacy. Cordula Quint asserts, "Indeed, Ludovic is engaging Jérôme in a queered

‘doing’ of the ‘I do,’ but his staged citation of the marriage vows fails to be performative because it takes place in the absence of witness and so the ‘ceremony’ can bear no legitimacy in the public eye” (47). With this, “because the boy’s action takes place in the wrong circumstances the queer agency manifest in it is no more than provisional; it fails to engage socially with the community” (47). The film works to make the marriage between Ludo and Jérôme inconsequential in various capacities; however, the implications of such makes the progressive ideologies within the film incomplete or inadequate in terms of the actual marriage contract. The film can seem to blindly tackle issues in relation to queerness and transgenderism, yet blandly reproduce a marriage that subscribes to models of marriage that devalue the confounding possibilities of homosexual marriage; however, by calling further attention to the biological genders of Ludo and Jérôme, there is a further notification of homosexuality on behalf of the viewer that causes an upending of the traditional marriage contract.

However, as Michael Schiavi’s article “A “Girlboy’s” Own Story: Non-Masculine Narrativity in *Ma Vie En Rose*” engages in depth with the concept of homosexuality and transgenderism in film, it can be useful in determining to what extent transvestitism works as a smokescreen to undermine the presence of queerness in the film. As Ludovic’s sexuality is read to be latent heterosexuality, or, assumed heterosexuality glittered with the spectacle of transvestitism, Ludovic’s prepubescence throughout the film underscores the sexuality that he may or may not contain. As Schiavi asserts Ludovic to be “too young to declare credibly that he is either homosexual or transsexual, Ludo is presumed innately heterosexual by default—and thus cannot initially rise even to the basic narrative level of conflict” (3). As such, those negotiating within the parameters of the film must view his marriage to Jérôme as folly, thus negating its influence on and by the marriage contract. This leads to a conception of this marriage as neither heterosexual nor homosexual, leaving any subversion of the traditional marriage plot to remain nonexistent; as such, the film essentially ascribes to the very modes of marriage that it seeks to completely either disregard or deconstruct.

The opening of the film confronts the viewer with three separate instances of heterosexual marriages, establishing models of successful marriage which either complement or foil Ludovic's affection for Jérôme. These marriages, all of which follow the legal rule as defined by Pateman as between one man and one woman, work to structure a model by which to norm marriage within the film. In this world, Ludovic is presented with a model of marriage that is completely dependent, either implicitly or explicitly, on the combination of two separate genders and gender expression as the proper combination for the marriage contract's success. As such, the marriages viewed in the opening sequence of the film show women putting dramatic cosmetics, jewelry, and dresses on; with this, the film works diligently to create a world where the *most* important facet of the marriage contract is gender expression. Pateman asserts that the marriage contract's reliance on separate sexes ensured the proper differential power upon separate genders (Pateman citation). As such, a marriage between two males completely undermines this rule and in effect confuses the power rules of the male.

As Carole Pateman's description of the marriage contract requires both one female and one male to negotiate within the confines of a union, Ludovic's abject sexual identity both becomes party to this marriage contract and subverts it. Pateman asserts, "unlike other contracts, the marriage contract cannot be entered into by any two (or more) sane adults, but is restricted to two parties, one of whom must be a man and the other a woman (and who must not be related in certain prescribed ways)" (167). If Ludovic's gender identity is in fact feminine or is assumed as a matter of child's play, does this marriage with a boy threaten this marriage contract? In this instance of marriage, the connection made can be more closely linked to a childish game of cowboys and Indians, a simple allegory of the fantastical imaginations of children. However, it is seen in this situation that when negotiating even in a game of cowboys and Indians, someone must always be an Indian. This idea of child's play can lead the viewer to assume Ludo's nondescript sexuality as unimportant as he is merely filling a required role of a game. Ludovic is certainly able to be viewed as sexually nondescript in that he is far from reaching sexual puberty and has a longer, feminine

haircut; Ludovic can pass as female without any elements of cross-dressing. With this, the marriage between he and Jérôme can be viewed, speaking in terms of performativity, as a heterosexual partnership between one man and one woman; however, the disidentification of Jérôme's sexuality throughout the film, whether it be through Jérôme's mother's fainting or Ludovic's parents making him cut his long hair works to reinforce the queerness inherent in the film and to subvert the traditional marriage plot offered by Pateman.

However, what must also be called into question within the film is on what levels and to what degree are gender roles still at work in defining the marriage contract (within the film) as either traditional or countertraditional? According to Keith Reader, the fantastical nature of Pam within the film is "counterbalanced by what Kate Ince calls 'the very excessive character of Pam's femininity'—never more than in the final shot where she winks broadly at the audience. This evokes Joan Riviere's view of womanliness as a masquerade" (55). This becomes important in correlation with realizing Pam's role within the film; after all, "Pam is frequently seen in flight, like Peter Pan who for Garber is a major icon of the cross-dressing world and thus may seem to encapsulate the 'volunatrist fallacy' of gender, with its comforting but dubious implication that it is possible to soar free from the trappings of biology and society". Pam represents exactly what Ludovic wants to be; however, she represents the very models of femininity that have been reinforced by traditional modes of gender and marriage.

The film presents a version of transgenderism and marriage that seemingly requires the compulsory heterosexual ideologies enveloped within the traditional marriage plot to be present for the viewer's either comfort or the implementation of a comedic mode of plot structure. According to Cordula Quint, "Pam's dominance in the boy's fantasy life—her vibrant red dresses and blonde bombshell appeal (Dolly Parton-style drag)—calls up in him an awareness of male desire and his own desire to oblige to it" (46). Cordula Quint also calls attention to the very behavior displayed by Ludo throughout the film; for instance, in one scene, Ludo is dancing about and singing "I read all the books about romance and roses / I mark all the parts where the

boyfriend proposes / I long to be happy, it's like a neurosis" (qtd. In Quint 46). What becomes clear throughout the course of the film is Ludo's reliance upon the hyper-sexualized conception of female identity that he feels is inherent in a portrayal as a girl. Quint asserts that "Ludovic's attempts at 'being a girl' strictly fit the conventional narrative model established by Pam, according to which female happiness and success mean being sexually attractive, chosen, proposed to, and finally married—in short, being passive and desired" (46). The film seemingly takes heteronormative ideologies to extremes beyond the marriages or relationships presented throughout the film via the use of the La Monde de Pam. This doll represents a complete transcendence from the natural and oppressive world into a world that is seemingly filled with the agency so longed for by Ludovic; however, the doll serves as the very model of the yielding half of a binary that this film seeks to completely refute. By reinforcing models of a feminine/masculine dichotomy, *Ma Vie en Rose* is unable to create any statement in advocacy of an identification of support, and must, rather, deem Ludo as the very girl that problematizes the marriage contract and plot.

Another point that contextually places Ludo within the parameters of a complete heteronormative society is with his cross-dressing relationship with Christine. Ludo visits Christine's birthday party dressed in, as his parents would deem, appropriate garb consisting of a musketeer costume when he meets Christine, a bullying young girl that feels equally inadequate in her extremely feminine dress. As Christine forcibly makes Ludo exchange costumes, the reader is faced with cross-dressing that can be seemingly seen to subvert traditional modes of gender expression. According to Quint, "The film introduces here a female inverse image of its boy protagonist. In fact, at the end of the physical appearance of the two children collapses the hyperbolic gender dyad so deeply encrypted in the public imagination" (56). However, it can also be seen that this literal mode of cross dressing reinforces compulsory heterosexuality by maintaining the desired heterosexual outcome of the film. Instead of presenting a world in which Ludo's inherent queerness can be acknowledged, the film glosses over this realization by making Ludo a girl and Christine a boy. Quint also argues

that “If, as Butler argues, conventional gender performance ‘conceals the gender discontinuities that run rampant within the heterosexual, bisexual, gay and lesbian contexts’ then the two children at the end of *Ma Vie en Rose* reveal and foreground those discontinuities” (56); however, while the film does indeed foreground this gender discontinuity, any semblance of either a literal or metaphorical marriage or relationship within the text must be met with some levels of gender ascription, inherently deeming the marriages and relationships as having little threat to the convention of marriage.

Classifying *Ma Vie en Rose* as a comedic marriage plot requires a reading into the formal narrative structure of the marriage plot within the film and its correlation to Northrop Frye’s seven phases of comedy. Frye asserts, in most comedies “the happier society established at the end of the comedy is left undefined, in contrast to the ritual bondage of the humors” (181); however, as the La Monde de Pam invites Ludo into a space unrestricted or unpolluted by social convention or the humorous world surrounding the film, this plot requires a reading on the periphery of this quasi-traditional marriage plot. Pam reflects a breach of humorous success and entrance into Frye’s fourth phase of comedy, “which has affinities with the medieval tradition of the seasonal ritual-play. We may call it the drama of the green world, its plot being assimilated to the ritual theme of the triumph of life and love over the waste land” (181). While the humorous society surrounding the ideologies of Ludovic’s either homosexuality or dissimulated heterosexuality refuse to acquiesce to a marriage defying or in actuality threatening the marriage contract, he is, even at the film’s pseudo-assuring close, forced to remain scathed by the humors.

However, upon invitation into the world of the La Monde de Pam, either through the television or a public advertisement, he is able to leave the humorous sphere and enter freely into a lollipop colored world where “the boy is able to cast her/himself in the role of a young bride, where s/he can spend whole days combing her hair, gazing into mirrors, or gaping at the city park with its wedding pavilion and heart-shaped duck pond” (46). Within a Shakespearian context, Northrop Frye outlines the model of the green-world: “the action of the comedy begins in

a world represented as a normal world, moves into the green world, goes into a metamorphosis there in which the comic resolution is an achieved, and returns to the normal world” (182). If this cosmic resolution is indeed achieved, the pretend marriage between Ludo and Jérôme can no longer be deemed fictional, and moreover, compulsory heterosexuality cannot influence any ideologies reiterated or originated within this marriage. However, the green-world of *Ma Vie en Rose* can take on a much larger context as “the green world charges the comedies with the symbolism of victory of summer over winter”; also, “in the rituals and myths the earth that produces the rebirth is generally a female figure, and the death and revival, or disappearance and withdrawal, of human figures in romantic comedy generally involves the heroine” (182).

With this model, the green-world works on two separate levels in *Ma Vie en Rose* to initiate a dialogue with both the humorous world from which it departs and with the inherent feminine qualities it contains. Essentially, Berliner utilizes this film in ways to not only subvert the traditional marriage plot and create a narrative in opposition to the traditional boy-meets-girl bildungsroman, but also utilizes this film to create a commentary or dialogue contradicting the viewer’s conventional conception of marriage’s placement within society and its importance in regard to gender codification and subordination. As Frey asserts, the rebirth or the resurrecting aspects of marriage are inherently female, defying the traditional marriage contract that places on some levels, conscious or not, power within the masculine, *Ma Vie en Rose* utilizes not only gender transcendence but also the actual institution of marriage to provide or endow the feminine half of this binary with some levels of agency.

In *Ma Vie en Rose*, marriage works in twofold manner to subvert the non-discursive restrictions placed upon heterosexual marriages and the marriage contract. Pateman asserts, “Not only does a ‘husband’ obtain a certain power over his wife whether or not he wishes to have it, but the marriage contract is sexually ascriptive. [...] [W]hat follows from this criticism? The argument that marriage should become a properly contractual relation implies that sexual difference is also an aspect of ‘status’” (167). As such, a homosexual marriage would indeed create a

threat to the marriage contract that extends to heterosexual partnerships. Ludovic's marriage to Jérôme subverts the expectations of gender within the ascriptive system of marriage; however, it is not just in this regard that Ludovic deconstructs the marginalization of sexuality within marriage. Cordula Quint asserts "that one's gender and one's sexual desires and practices may not be continuous with anatomically sexed bodies in the way that compulsory heterosexuality prescribes can be communicated only by means of performative cultural tactics that stress discontinuity: for example, a male body citing the gender prescriptions for the female and vice versa" (48). As Butler's assertion that the female transgendered body must, in some ways, be viewed as male within film, this facet of gender as either a homosexual or heterosexual partnership between Ludovic and Jérôme becomes irrelevant; the mere transgressive act of changing gender lends Ludovic agency.

How, then, do we identify the agency provided in Ludo's desire to change or alter his sexual identity or genitalia? While I do not intend Irigaray to work as a primary source to this research, I am interested in her conception of the agency in gender as it is found in the physicality of the body or genitalia. The corporeality of the female body is, as Irigaray theory asserts, a signifier for both voice and the agency of self-expression: she points out: "Woman 'touches herself' all the time, and moreover no one can forbid her to do so, for her genitals are formed of two lips in continuous contact. Thus, within herself, she is already two—but not divisible into one(s)—that caress each other" (Irigaray, *This Sex* 24). This self-expression is under attack by those in conflict with Ludovic's sexuality; both the actual self-expression of the female body, and the self-expression created by transgenderism must be completely eliminated for a successful implementation of the proper marriage. The conception of heterosexist gender roles forced upon Ludovic works with his own perception of gender and seeks to provide him more agency in becoming female. This is in complete contradiction to the power afforded to the male within the traditional marriage contract and seeks to subvert the concept of a male having the power within the relationship. Irigaray asserts the female to have more agency or voice simply in the physicality of her genitalia, and as Ludovic

seeks to become female, he is completely deconstructing the power differential inherent in marriage.

While the film upends traditional models of marriage in ways that relate to both queerness and transgenderism, it does, on levels both overt and covert, reinstate a heteronormative society in which Ludo is unable to negotiate within a contract limited to sexualities outside of convention; however, Butler's assertions that fracturing the transgender experience within the film creates an inverse of marriage that calls the reader's focus to a homosexual notion of marriage, subverting the traditional marriage plot and contract, subsequently reducing the power of the masculine and articulating agency for the feminine. With this, the film works to 'subjugate' heterosexuality and focus, instead, on the agency afforded to those that transform from male to female. The film complicates notions of marriage in that the readings into the act of matrimony or relationships within the film seemingly places the film within the realm of blandly reproducing heteronormativity instead of calling into question the very marriage rites that have adversely affected the queer community; however, both Ludovic's time in the green world and the very transgressive act of choosing a life as a female places, on theories related to strictly gender, power for the female.

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When Words Are Not Enough: Expressing Trauma Through Image in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*

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When *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* was published in 2005 critics met it with mixed reviews, owing, no doubt, in part to author Jonathan Safran Foer's insistence on frequently injecting images into the text. Though these images play a crucial and often profound role throughout the novel, this addition of and reliance upon images in the text is the greatest source of criticism for the novel. John Updike writes, "The book's hyperactive visual surface covers up a certain hollow monotony in its verbal drama," and goes on to say that compared to Foer's first novel, *Everything Is Illuminated*, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, "seems thinner, overextended, and sentimentally watery" (Updike 8). However, though some, like Updike, would argue that the images are the author's attempt to make up for inadequate writing or the images make light of too serious a topic, I am going to argue in this essay that not only do the images in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* enhance the story, they are absolutely necessary to the novel as they work to uncover the slow, subconscious healing process each narrator undergoes.

When nine-year-old Oskar Schell awoke on the morning of September 11, 2001, he had no reason to suspect that things were amiss. His father had tucked him into bed with a story the night before, as he did every night. His mom made his lunch and walked him to school, per usual. It was not until the news from that fateful morning started flowing into his elementary school that Oskar's refined, everyday routine disappeared only to be replaced by a new, highly traumatic reality. Oskar Schell is the young protagonist in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*; a book commonly described as "the story of a young boy who lost his father on September 11" (Foer interview). But Foer wanted

the book to be more than that; he describes *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* as a “story about loss and about family with September 11th in the backdrop” (Foer interview). The narrative revolves not only around Oskar, but his entire family. His Grandma, Grandfather, and father all contribute their voices to the narration to tell a story of a search for healing amidst incalculable loss.

Oskar lives with his mom and dad in their apartment in New York City. Despite his youth, the pre-9/11 Oskar eagerly investigates all aspects of the world around him, fully supported by his parents. A literal snapshot of his business card in the text reveals his numerous interests. Among the many occupations listed on each business card are, “Amateur Entomologist, Pacifist, Vegan, Inventor...” (Foer 99). But though the occupations are varied and abundant, Oskar is particularly drawn to being an inventor. He begins the novel by inventing, “What about a teakettle?” he asks. “What if the spout opened and closed when the steam came out, so it would become a mouth, and it could whistle pretty melodies, or do Shakespeare, or just crack up with me?” (Foer 1). Though it seems that Oskar has always been an inventor, after his father’s death the inventions take on a new earnestness and a new theme. Most of Oskar’s proposed inventions revolve around his need to feel safe in a post-9/11 world - in his post-father world. As the novel progresses, this need for safety becomes more prominent in his inventions.

We need bigger pockets,” he says to himself, “We need enormous pockets, pockets big enough for our families, and our friends, and even the people...we’ve never met but still want to protect. We need pockets for boroughs and for cities, a pocket that could hold the universe... But I knew that there couldn’t be pockets that enormous. In the end, everyone loses everyone. There was no invention to get around that. (Foer 74)

Oskar needs inventions, like bigger pockets, to protect him in a world where he believes he has no protection.

But this desire for safety and protection extends beyond Oskar; both of his grandparents are also searching for it. His

grandparents emigrated from Germany shortly after living through the bombing of Dresden in 1945. Though the bombing itself was traumatic for the entire city, both Grandma and Grandfather are further traumatized by the loss of Anna, Grandma's sister and Grandfather's lover. Grandfather is traumatized to the point that he loses speech. Beginning with Anna's name, Grandfather slowly loses words until he can no longer talk at all. Grandfather and Grandma decide to marry each other once they move to New York City because their grief can only be understood by each other. Shortly before the birth of their son, Thomas, Jr. (Oskar's father), Grandfather leaves Grandma because he can no longer exist with the daily reminder of everything he has lost. This loss characterizes Oskar, his father, and his grandparents. They define their reality by the trauma they have endured and are now unable to escape. But Foer defines this trauma with more than words. Using Freud's theory of the subconscious as well as trauma theory, I will show that each of the three narrators' set of images reveal a new and more effective coping mechanism for the traumatized subconscious than words alone are able to achieve.

Freud's Subconscious

In Sigmund Freud's theory of the subconscious, the raw desires of the id constantly create friction with the abrasive and controlling superego. The ego is left to manifest these two dominating desires into behavior that is both appropriate and socially acceptable. The interesting part of Freud's theory, though, is not the competing desires of the id and superego, but that all of this internal strife is just that, internal. According to Freud, the desires of the id and superego are completely unknown to the individual. Those desires can only be seen and understood if a psychiatrist uses techniques that get at the root of the subconscious (Freud 8-9). Freud describes this as the "latent content" of the subconscious. The subconscious often expresses this latent content through dreams. Dream psychology is crucial to a thorough understanding of Freud's psychoanalysis because so much of what subconscious is to the individual is manifested through dreams. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud theorizes that

dreams themselves “are brief, meager and laconic in comparison with the range and wealth of the dream-thoughts” (Freud 819). These dream-thoughts reveal the precise inner workings of the subconscious. The thoughts that had been repressed by the superego find an outlet in dream-thoughts. Freud alleges that in the interpretation of dreams it is important to know that what “is produced by the ostensible thinking in the dream is the *subject-matter* of the dream-thoughts and not the *mutual relations between them*” (Freud 822). Freud goes on to describe the difference between latent content and dreams themselves this way,

Every attempt that [had] hitherto been made to solve the problem of dreams dealt directly with their *manifest* content as it is presented in our memory...[Freud has] introduced a new class of psychical material between the manifest content of dreams and the conclusions of [his] enquiry: namely, their *latent* content, or... the ‘dream-thoughts.’”(Freud 818)

Freud’s theory that unconscious or latent thought lies behind what is witnessed in a dream was groundbreaking at the time and has become essential for understanding Freudian thought. Psychoanalysis seeks to uncover, through different therapy techniques, this latent content, this content that fuels all dreams but remains unknown to the individual.

Of course, according to Freud, the unconscious cannot be fully understood because of its depth, but its latent content is not completely unknowable. In his search for therapies that would make this latent content comprehensible, Freud turned to hypnosis and cathartic talking cures (Freud 8-9). Freud built all his theories on the assumption that everyone represses memories and experiences, some more than others, some intentionally, some subconsciously, but still every single person represses something. Indeed, in his work *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement* Freud writes that repression is “the main pillar upon which rests the edifice of psychoanalysis” (Freud 9). Anxiety prompts repression more than any other stimulant. If a certain desire leads to anxiety, the individual

learns quickly to repress those desires rather than acting on them. Freud explains, “it is highly probable that the immediate precipitating causes of primal repressions are quantitative factors such as ... the earliest outbreaks of anxiety, which are of a very intense kind” (Freud 245). Freud’s neurotic patients were simply those people who were repressing so much it started to disrupt daily function (Freud 4-5).

Repression also works as a defense mechanism against trauma. Unlike neurotic patients whose unconscious represses anxiety-producing desires, trauma victims instead repress in an attempt to “come to grips with and to accept the fact of death” (Felluga 3). Freud develops the idea of a “death-instinct” which longs to “re-establish a state of things that was disturbed by the emergence of life” (Felluga 2). Freud’s death-instinct simply seeks the peaceful nonexistence the individual had known before birth. This theory gives Freud an explanation with which to understand trauma victims’ unconscious desire to continually relive the trauma they have experienced through the “repetition-compulsion”: “[the] mind’s tendency to repeat traumatic events in order to deal with them. The repetition can take the form of dreams, storytelling, or even hallucination. This compulsion is closely tied up with the death drive” (Felluga 5). Freud’s therapy for traumatized patients is his famous talking cure: an attempt to make sense of the patient’s random, disjointed phrases and words, and, by so doing, reveal what the patient unconsciously represses.

The characters in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* certainly deal with significant repression, but also frequently experience repetition-compulsion. Grandfather and Grandma work so hard to repress that they choose to create countless, unwritten rules in an attempt to avoid situations that would prompt them to recall what they endured (Foer 175). Oskar, too, is absorbed in reliving the events of September 11, 2001. Foer uses italicized text and indentations to set apart the messages Dad left on the home phone right before the Towers fell. Oskar saves the messages and listens to them again and again, almost as if he hopes that one time the outcome will be different (Foer 68-69). In her article “Redefining Trauma Post 9/11: Freud’s Talking Cure and Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*,” Anke Geertsma argues that Freud’s psychoanalysis is the

best way to understand trauma and its psychological effects in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. She writes,

A Freudian psychoanalytic approach to trauma does not undermine the complexity and severity of the experience, yet [it] resists the notion that the trauma is ultimately unrepresentable and thereby provides the foundation for a working through of trauma, and a platform for (public) sharing, empathy, and debate. (Geertsma 97)

What is particularly noteworthy in Geertsma's analysis is her emphasis that trauma is not "ultimately unrepresentable." Trauma can be expressed; the difficulty for trauma victims, including the narrators of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, is learning how to do so.

Trauma Theory

Recent developments in trauma theory expand upon Freud's psychoanalytic ideas on the relationship of repression and trauma. After the 1980 diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), trauma theory seized upon this new definition to produce new theories on trauma and why it persists. Though the recognition of PTSD has made the disorder more complex, Cathy Caruth, leading expert in trauma theory, manages to summarize trauma by saying that most descriptions of trauma,

generally agree that there is a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts, or behaviors stemming from the event, along with the numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event. (Caruth 4)

Trauma victims often unintentionally trap themselves in a repetitive cycle of horrors that they are both inexplicably drawn to and utterly repelled by. Caruth expands on the idea of trau-

matic events remaining with the trauma victim by explaining, “The traumatized...carry an impossible history within them” (Caruth 4). This is the plight of Foer’s characters. They carry an “impossible history” with them everywhere and inadvertently allow this history to define them. Over the course of the novel, Oskar, Grandma, and Grandfather all experience this increased awareness due to the personal and defining nature of the history that never leaves them.

Dori Laub, Holocaust survivor and trauma theorist, argues that though trauma victims intimately know this defining history, trauma is also marked by a curious lack of witnesses. According to Laub, witnesses struggle to testify to the trauma they have endured because they are missing the ability to fully speak into what they are witnessing. He writes that this “gap of witnesses” exists because “what was ultimately missing, [was] not in the courage of the witnesses, [nor] in the depth of their emotional responses, but in the human cognitive capacity to perceive and to assimilate the totality of what was really happening at the time” (Laub 69). Though people undoubtedly witness clearly the full horror of traumatic events, trauma renders them unable to fully recount what they have witnessed. Laub argues that this gap of witnesses commonly characterizes trauma, especially in historically jarring events like the Holocaust or even September 11. Witnesses struggle to find the appropriate words to describe what they have witnessed. This, however, by no means lessens their emotional or physical pain. If anything, their desire to speak the unspeakable only exacerbates their pain. As Laub says, “None find peace in silence...” (Laub 64). This notion illuminates why Oskar, Grandma, and Grandfather all find a release from the traumatic events they have witnessed through copious images supplemental to their narrative voices.

But even though this theory of image as testimony provides some release, Laub believes that testimony itself is a “ceaseless struggle” as trauma witnesses continually try to find someone, anyone, who will listen and, through listening, find complete understanding of events the listener has only heard of but never personally witnessed. Laub writes that, though trauma victims need to tell the story, “no amount of telling seems ever to do justice to this inner compulsion” (Laub 63). The desire to be

understood, to find someone to share the agony, cannot ever be satisfied no matter how many times a victim shares his or her experience. Laub's ceaseless struggle becomes evident through the images of two of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close's* narrators. The novel depicts Grandma and Grandfather's struggle to find the best way to voice what they have witnessed. They look for healing and are continually disappointed. Oskar, however, eventually ends his struggle as he comes to an understanding that enables him to begin healing.

"My Feelings"

Oskar's grandma seeks justification for things she has seen and done. Grandma's traumatic losses are two-fold: the loss of her sister, Anna, in the bombing of Dresden and the death of her son on September 11th. Her voice in the novel comes through a long letter she writes to Oskar - an explanation of her life and her decisions entitled "My Feelings." Though "My Feelings," unlike Oskar's narrative, contains no pictures, portions of "My Feelings" still function as images in the text through the unusual textual formatting Foer uses throughout Grandma's voice. Irregular spacing, crossed out words, and blank spaces all work together to show Grandma's subconscious struggle to justify her decisions in the face of the trauma she witnessed.

Grandma's trauma is marked by a void. Cathy Caruth describes this void as,

the inability fully to witness the event as it occurs, or the ability to witness the *event* fully only at the cost of witnessing oneself. Central to the very immediacy of this experience, that is, is a gap that carries the force of the event and does so precisely at the expense of simple knowledge and memory. The force of this experience would appear to arise precisely, in other words, in the collapse of its understanding. (Caruth 7)

Trauma, Caruth argues, leaves a void in the testimony of trauma witnesses that they are unable to understand or even recognize. This void occurs frequently in Grandma's writing. She leaves

her writing full of gaps; Caruth's "collapse of understanding" pockmarks Grandma's understanding of her life. She herself recognizes "my life story was spaces" (Foer 176). Indeed, when she sits down to write her life story, encouraged to do so by Grandfather, she only produces blank pages (Foer 121-123). Her terrible eyesight means she cannot see that there was no ink in the typewriter as she spent months laboring over this document, but Foer makes sure the reader sees the emptiness in her story by including three blank pages after Grandma hands her story to Grandfather to read the final draft. The emptiness of trauma defines her life and makes it impossible for her void to ever be filled by anything.

Between the gaps in Grandma's letter, she often contradicts herself as she attempts to justify her thoughts and actions to Oskar. For example, when describing her difficult marriage to Grandfather, Grandma says,

Our marriage was not unhappy, Oskar. He knew how to make me laugh. And sometimes I made him laugh. We had to make rules, but who doesn't? There is nothing wrong with compromising. Even if you compromise almost everything. (Foer 175)

Here, Grandma pauses as her subconscious struggles to rationalize her marriage, which was extremely arduous - despite her protests to the contrary - due to her complete devotion to Grandfather, and Grandfather's complete devotion to Grandma's sister, Anna. They fruitlessly endeavor to make their marriage work when they both know the marriage only exists because Anna died and they now have camaraderie as trauma victims.

Not only do the gaps represent the speechless trauma Grandma has witnessed, the odd formatting shows the competing id and superego desires in Grandma's subconscious. According to Freud, the id is "filled with energy reaching it from the instincts... only a striving to bring about the satisfaction of the instinctual needs subject to the observance of the pleasure principle" (Freud 91-92). While in contrast the superego "takes on the influence of those who have stepped into the place of parents" (Freud 80). Grandma's id wants to love Grandfather

as her own husband, which he is, but her superego constantly reminds her that this is impossible because he only ever truly loved Anna. The gaps in Grandma's narration can be read in a variety of ways, but from a psychoanalytic perspective they visually represent Grandma's unconscious struggle to justify the traumatic experiences throughout her life. Grandma's life can best be summed up by Dr. Laub who writes, "The untold events had become so distorted in her unconscious memory as to make her believe that she herself, and not the perpetrator, was responsible for the atrocities she witnessed" (Laub 65). Though Laub refers to a Holocaust survivor, Grandma's images and words prove experiences precisely what Laub describes, though she does not recognize it. Grandma's disjointed letter, full of irregular arrangements that automatically draw the eye, shows a woman struggling to make sense of the horrific death of her loved ones (Foer 84-85). One reason Grandma feels such a strong desire to find justification goes back to the night before Anna died. At the end of "My Feelings" Grandma explains her guilt. Talking to Anna in the bed they shared she says,

I want to tell you something.
 She said, You can tell me tomorrow.
 I had never told her how much I loved her...
 It was always unnecessary...
 Here is the point of everything I have been trying to
 tell you, Oskar.
 It's always necessary. (Foer 314)

She places each sentence on a new line, causing the reader's eyes to instantly be captivated by the abruptness of the text. Each period forces the reader to pause and consider, just as they would an image. Like Laub describes, some of Grandma's trauma comes from the guilt she projects onto herself for leaving so much of her relationship with Anna undone or un-lived. She must live the rest of her life wrestling with that guilt combined with the guilt of marrying Anna's lover, Grandfather, whom Grandma had always secretly loved. Grandma cannot express herself apart from these gaps, and the novel ends with the

understanding that this void will always demarcate her reality. The trauma is simply too much for her to exist any other way.

“Why I’m Not Where You Are”

Thomas Schell, Sr., Oskar’s grandfather, Anna’s lover, and Grandma’s husband, is the second narrator of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. Grandfather, like Grandma, survives the bombing of Dresden in 1945, but the resulting trauma deprives him of the ability to speak. Slowly, Grandfather “loses” words until he can no longer talk and is reduced to writing things down in a “Daybook” in order to communicate. Grandfather’s Daybook is featured frequently in the text. On each page he writes only one sentence or phrase, so his chapters contain pages and pages of singular sentences like, “I want two rolls,” or, “Excuse me, where do you get tickets?” (Foer 19, 131). Sometimes the Daybook goes on for pages at a time leaving the reader with only one side, Grandfather’s side, of the conversation. Some of his sentences are comical, most are heartbreaking. Although the Daybook contains words, rather than images, its pages still function as images within the text because of the way they are positioned. Each page of the Daybook is completely blank but for a single phrase, word, or sentence that immediately draws the eye in the same way the images in the text draw it. The odd spacing, like that of Grandma’s “My Feelings,” causes the reader to stop and slowly consider exactly what is said.

Grandfather’s Daybook pages are included in a larger letter he writes to his son, Thomas Schell, Jr., Oskar’s father. Like Grandma’s letter “My Feelings” written to Oskar, Grandfather entitles his letter, “Why I’m Not Where You Are” and wants it to be an explanation to Thomas, Jr. for all of Grandfather’s decisions. Unlike Grandma, who searches for justification, or Oskar, who seeks healing, Grandfather’s unconscious needs release from the oppressive guilt that governs his life. An inability to cope with the trauma he witnessed leads Grandfather to leave his wife, Oskar’s grandmother, shortly after he finds out she is pregnant with Oskar’s father, a decision Grandfather regrets for the rest of his life. Through “Why I’m Not Where You Are” Grandfather’s subconscious looks for a way to tell his story, a

characteristic, according to Laub, that typifies the unconscious desire of many trauma victims. Laub writes, "There is, in each survivor, an imperative need to *tell* and thus to come to *know* one's story..." (Laub 63). Grandfather's writing shows this same imperative: he needs his son to understand. As part of the letter Grandfather writes, "Sometimes I can hear my bones straining under the weight of all of the lives I'm not living. In this life, I'm sitting in an airport trying to explain myself to my unborn son" (Foer 113). Only knowledge of Thomas, Jr.'s understanding will relieve the burden on Grandfather's guilty subconscious.

As Grandfather tries to explain his absence to his son, his writing runs closer and closer together as if rushing to include everything that must be said until the page becomes blackened by the ink of words being typed over and over each other (Foer 284). Grandfather does this because he has so much more to say to his son than he has the space in which to say it. Words, like they are for Oskar and Grandma, are completely inadequate. Shortly before the text runs together entirely, Grandfather wishes for "an infinitely blank book and the rest of time" to say everything (Foer 281). This black page ends Grandfather's voice in the novel and it is here that Grandfather's subconscious has finally been able to be freed of the trauma that has burdened it for so long (Foer 184). If the traumatized unconscious needs to continue telling its story, as Laub suggests, Grandfather's black page allows him to tell his story completely and finally. The blackness of trauma on Grandfather's subconscious has been transferred directly to the page in this infinite act of telling.

"Why I'm Not Where You Are" Revised

Oskar's father, Thomas, Jr., has only one moment of narration in the entire novel, and his narration comes exclusively through image. Growing up without knowing his father left Thomas emotionally damaged, not unlike his parents. Though Thomas dies before the book begins, Oskar, Grandma, and Grandfather's narrations all work together to give the reader an idea of his character. Oskar gives the most insight into Thomas' life. For example, Thomas has a flair for recognizing mistakes in written works. As Oskar says,

[My Dad] could find a mistake in every single article we looked at. Sometimes they were grammar mistakes, sometimes they were mistakes with geography or facts, and sometimes the article just didn't tell the whole story. (Foer 12)

This desire to get it right comes through in Thomas' single section of narration. Thomas takes the last installment of his father's letter and simply circles all of his father's mistakes in red pen (Foer 208-216). Some are grammatical mistakes, some are factual mistakes, but most of the circles come in places where Grandfather "just isn't telling the whole story." Though Thomas does not write a single word, his subconscious thought shines through on the page. One of the most telling circles comes at the very end of the letter. Grandfather signed the letter, "I love you, Your father," and Thomas has simply circled the entire thing in red pen (Foer 216). The desertion of his father before his birth makes Thomas unable to believe that his father loves him or even that he exists. To Thomas' marred unconscious, this statement, and others, must be turned into an image in order for him to adequately express the deep pain he internally harbors.

Stuff That Happened To Me

Of the four narrators, Oskar uses images as a substitution for words the most. Oskar, the primary narrator of the novel, creates a "scrapbook of everything that happened to me," which he appropriately entitles *Stuff That Happened To Me* (Foer 42). But rather than just describing what Oskar's collection of images looks like, Foer includes the actual images. The images occur throughout the book as Oskar adds to *Stuff That Happened To Me*, but the largest collection comes early in the novel when Oskar pulls out the scrapbook and begins flipping through it. As Oskar flips the pages, so does the reader. There is no explanation of why Oskar included each image. The reader is left to discern the importance of each image as they learn more of the story. Some examples of the images in *Stuff That Happened To Me* are: a page of thousands of keys hanging on a pegboard, on another, the word "Purple" is written in green ink and large

font, an image of Stephen Hawking, and a picture of Hamlet holding Yorick's skull. But one image speaks the most towards the source of trauma in Oskar's life, a body falling from one of the World Trade Center towers on the morning of September 11, 2001. As Oskar explains more, it becomes evident that each image in *Stuff That Happened To Me* reminds Oskar of some aspect of the morning of September 11th and the abrupt removal of his father from his life. *Stuff That Happened To Me* represents the "increased arousal" Cathy Caruth describes. In an attempt to keep his grief under control, Oskar frequently gives himself physical bruises, but *Stuff That Happened To Me* gives him emotional and psychological bruises as the images prompt the incessant recall of events he would like to forget but will never be able to (Foer 172-173). Despite the pain *Stuff That Happened To Me* forces onto Oskar, he never stops pulling it out and adding to it throughout the novel, thus ensuring that he maintains a state of arousal to the trauma he witnessed for the entire story; he continues to relive the trauma.

Increased arousal worsens Oskar's foremost problem since his father died: he cannot find safety, anywhere, at any time. While the images in *Stuff That Happened To Me* show that Oskar's traumatized mind cannot break from the repetition-compulsion of the trauma he witnessed, the images provide a testament to the longings of Oskar's subconscious. Oskar's subconscious thought, based on Freud's theories, engages in heavy repression of what Oskar has witnessed and endured. However, Freud's traditional talking cure is completely ineffective with Oskar. His visits to the psychiatrist are anything but helpful. The psychiatrist introduces the idea of free association with Oskar to see if it will be helpful: "I'm going to say a word and I want you to tell me the first thing that comes to mind... There are no right or wrong answers here. No rules" (Foer 202). But Oskar, being an extremely intelligent 9-year-old, has no interest in cooperating with an operation he absolutely loathes (Foer 200-201). He explains to the reader why he does not need psychological help saying, "I didn't understand why I needed [psychiatric] help, because it seemed to me that you *should* wear heavy boots when your dad dies, and if you *aren't* wearing heavy boots, *then* you need help" (Foer 200). Because of Oskar's at-

titude, he intentionally answers all the free association prompts ridiculously. If the psychiatrist says “family” Oskar responds with “heavy petting” (Foer 202). Or “bellybutton” is associated with “stomach anus” (Foer 202). None of this association is true, but rather an example of Oskar refusing to allow what he dubs as an absurd attempt at free association be a release for his unconscious. Thus his unconscious looks for another outlet for release from the build-up of repressed thoughts. It finds release through the images in *Stuff That Happened To Me*. The very fact that the relation of the images to Oskar’s trauma is difficult to discern demonstrates that Oskar engages in free association by relating them in ways only his subconscious can understand without further explanation. The images become Oskar’s new talking cure since the trauma in his life overwhelms what can simply be put into words. Trauma is often unspeakable and, consequently, the images describe what Oskar’s words cannot.

The images reveal Oskar’s subconscious desire to find safety and truth in a dangerous, lying world. He does not often put these desires into words, but instead he shows them in pictures. His subconscious seems to know that finding safety and truth will be long strides in Oskar’s journey to find healing in a post-9/11 world. Before September 11, Oskar’s worldview relied heavily on what he saw to determine truth. After September 11, visuals still play a significant role in determining truth as demonstrated by the prevalence of images throughout the book, but those visuals do not always contain the whole truth. As he says, “[Before September 11] I didn’t believe in things that couldn’t be observed... It’s not that I believe in things that can’t be observed now, because I don’t. It’s that I believe that things are extremely complicated” (Foer 4). Oskar uses his encounter with a woman named Abby Black to illustrate the beginning of his transformation from believing in the things that can be seen to recognizing the world as more complicated. After Oskar meets Abby he asks her if he can take a picture of her. As he starts to take the picture Abby “put her hand in front of her face for some reason. I didn’t want to force her to explain herself, so I thought of a different picture I could take, which would be more truthful, anyway” (Foer 99). The picture that Oskar takes is on the page before; it is a picture of the back of a

woman's head which he includes in *Stuff That Happened To Me*. The picture of the back of Abby Black's head reveals Oskar's subconscious is learning to construct his new reality on the idea that sometimes what is most truthful is in what is not pictured rather than what is.

The picture of Abby Black exposes the beginning of Oskar's subconscious healing through the realization that safety and truth cannot always be exactly what they appear. However, the true moment of healing, when both the reader and Oskar realize that healing has indeed occurred, does not happen until the final pages of the novel. The last fourteen pages of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* are just pictures, but pictures that, as they do throughout the book, say much more than words can. The book ends with a series of images of a person falling from one of the Twin Towers set in reverse so it looks as if the person is flying upward, back into the towers, back into safety (Foer 327-341). Oskar prefaces the images by explaining what would happen if time could go in reverse: "[Dad] would have told me the story of the Sixth Borough, from the voice in the can at the end to the beginning, from 'I love you' to 'Once upon a time...' We would have been safe" (Foer 326). Here Oskar gives voice to an idea already seen in the images of *Stuff That Happened To Me*: that safety in a post-9/11 world, in a post-Dad world, could not be as it had been. Oskar knows that his father will never come back; the images do not show that time has reversed and everything once again became fine. Instead, the reversed fall shows that, despite everything that has happened to Oskar, his subconscious has found a way to be released from the trauma it experienced. Though the acts of September 11 have not been reversed in reality, their effects on Oskar's unconscious have been reversed in that Oskar's unconscious releases the repressed traumatic thoughts that have made life struggling and anxiety-filled in the months since his father's death. Once his unconscious thought realizes this in images, it becomes easier for Oskar, unlike his father or grandparents, to find safety through words.

Grandfather, Oskar, and Grandma, though all struggling with different aspects of trauma, all recognize that words inadequately express what they have lived through and witnessed.

Consequently, they each use images to speak in ways that their words alone are unable to do. Their individual subconscious thoughts seek release from individual struggles, yet they collectively use images to construct a narrative that would not otherwise exist. Jonathan Safran Foer's decision to include so many images and to incorporate so many odd text layouts is not without criticism. However, recognition that the images function as a Freudian talking cure for each narrator's subconscious makes each of Foer's images not only significant, but essential in understanding that trauma often renders its victims speechless and fills them with an unfillable void. Words are not enough.

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Renfield in Pink: The Difficulty of Defining Madness in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

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In the spring of 1886, in front of a scholarly crowd of some two hundred members of the Vienna Society of Physicians, the already well-established, if somewhat controversial, psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud presented the accumulation of a winter-long study with the French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot: he posited that traditionally female exhibitions of madness were, in fact, dual-gendered, suggesting medical cases where male patients exhibited the symptoms of hysteria, and citing the nearly one hundred case studies Charcot had published and extensively noted of men and boys with the mental disease. Despite Freud's efforts, the homogenously masculine audience was not convinced. "A man cannot be hysterical," one French alienist maintained as he left the venue after the presentation. "He has no uterus!" (Goldman 993).

Indeed, predominant European ideas about hysteria, and madness in general, characterized it as an overwhelmingly feminine ailment, due, conceivably, to the assumed irrationality of the female sex, an emotional weakness that sensibly forecasts mental weakness. The mythology of the madwoman was sensationalized in the works of Victorian authors, as noted by early twentieth century neurologist Fulgence Raymond, who dubbed the late nineteenth century "the heroic period" of hysteria (Micale 497); Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) immediately comes to mind, with her infamous "madwoman in the attic," a wraithish imp, "shaggy" and wild" (Brontë 5189), who scratches and cackles at various characters before setting Thornfield Manor ablaze, marring her gentlemanly husband, and jumping to her death. Diagnoses for hysteria increased almost epidemically in the latter part of the Victorian era; in France, for example, there were more than a hundred psychiatric theses written in the 1890s discussing female hysteria (as opposed to the odd dozen published in the 1840s), and, in addition, twenty percent of all French dissertations written

during the nineteenth century discussed female hysterical illnesses in some degree. As such, much of the action in that sensational crowd-pleaser *Dracula*, which Bram Stoker published in 1897 at the zenith of the popularity surrounding female hysteria, takes place in and around an insane asylum, with a particular focus on one inmate, a raving, Brontë-esque madperson; however, that person is not a woman.

In this paper, I dissect the position of *Dracula's* madman, Renfield, within the narrative of Bram Stoker's novel, as Renfield's hysteria affords him a particular position between the realm of femininity and that of masculinity due to his coded-female irrationality. This "honorary femininity" furnishes him a level of androgyny within the text, his subsequent objectification by the other characters mirroring a similar objectification instilled upon the novel's female characters. As such, discussions of irrationality in *Dracula* are unforgivably intertwined with discussions of gender. The Victorian idea of a madman is one of a person who exhibits "unreason," or severe irrationality; in this novel, however, with its reliance on the necessarily irrational supernatural, the division between rationality and irrationality gets complicated, and this paper redefines the parameters of madness—and, through it, femininity—as established by the relative treatment of Renfield, the only nominally mad character, within the novel.

Throughout the narrative, Dr. Seward treats Renfield as a novelty to be studied rather than a patient to be cured, an "interesting" "case" necessary to "understand" through clinically vigorous study (Stoker 99). Renfield's initially innocuous condition degenerates—he succeeds in escaping his asylum, naked, a situation which Dr. Seward himself considers to be "dangerous"; they find him in the surrounding woods succumbing to an exceedingly violent "paroxysm of rage," the likes of which Dr. Seward has "never s[een] [. . .] before" (149); once returned to the asylum, Renfield becomes increasingly violent and unstable. Despite his obvious instability, Dr. Seward decides to "play sane wits against mad ones" (156), aiming to aid Renfield's subsequent escape attempts in order to have a chance to follow him, thus meeting and confronting the infamous Count Dracula, callously endangering the disturbed mental patient in the process. Dr. Seward constantly toys with Renfield, which Van Helsing notices, at one point admitting to

Mina that Dr. Seward is busy because he “has his madmen to play with” (164). With Dr. Seward’s handling of Renfield, Renfield becomes an object of fascination and experimentation, a mere “index” to the “coming and going of the Count” (321), rather than a character with agency.

Renfield’s in-text impotence dialogues with the ideas suggested by Erinc Özdemir, who parallels a lack of power with the affliction of madness, as the “subjugation and victimization of both women and nature” by powered individuals is reminiscent of the intellectual dominance of the perceived sane over the perceived mad. The dominance of “man over woman” manifests as a dominance of “logos over pathos” (Özdemir 59), or of rationality over irrationality, as masculinity becomes synonymous with “reason and power” and femininity with “irrationality and helplessness” (Jäntti 212). As a feminist writer, of course, Özdemir compares rational power structures to patriarchal power structure with an aversion to the “irrational, feeling, nurture, fluidity, and heterogeneity” (58), madness manifesting as a “subversion” of societal norms, as femininity in itself is a subversion of the “dominant gender ideology” (57). Since its invention in the early nineteenth century, psychiatry has “performed a dual role of *managing* the mad [...] and of gaining and *systematizing* knowledge about the functions and disturbances of the mind” (emphasis added, Jäntti 211); psychiatry behaves as an exercise in dominance, robbing the deemed insane of their agency. For Özdemir, this establishes power employment as “justification of evil through logic and reason” (61), “justifying its transgressions [...] by the false ethic of rationality and logic” (59).

Stoker’s text otherwise complicates this established structure of power, as Renfield himself, though “definitely” mad, exhibits some of the same stringent rationality as his caretaker Dr. Seward, talking phlegmatically and rationally of the virtues of obtaining a kitten—not a cat, because “no one would refuse [him] a kitten, would they?” (102); though constantly referred to as a “lunatic” and “madman,” even Dr. Seward recognizes that there is a “method in his madness” (100). The “dogged argumentativeness” of Dr. Seward’s nature causes him to constantly engage in surprisingly level-headed discourse with his mental patient, “try[ing] to get [Renfield] to talk” with him, even when Renfield himself

is uninterested (167). Renfield, despite his “poor injured brain,” is the most able to accept the “grim reality” of Count Dracula’s vampiric menace, immediately stating that he “must not deceive [him]self,” as his near fatal encounter with the Count “was no dream” (399), where the other principal characters need much more convincing; as such, Renfield embodies both the disposition of the perfectly rational and that of the insane. This Renfield, the top-notch dialectician who is “usually respectful [...] and at times servile” (144), shares many of the same qualities as his closest ally within the novel, Mina Harker, as the men of the novel treat her own gifts of speech with a similar awe of observation, with Mina venerated as a “pearl among women” for her talents (312). Just as Renfield keeps a “little notebook” to “jot down” his own “deep problems” in indecipherable “masses of figures” (101), Mina vigorously makes her own accounts. Upon first meeting the spry young woman, Van Helsing is floored by her ability to communicate facts effectively, as it is “not always so with young ladies” (260). Both Renfield and Mina are rational. Adorably so.

Treating Mina in a similarly objectifying manner as Renfield reaffirms a parallel between femininity and madness, as further intimated by Van Helsing’s beliefs about the pervasiveness of madness:

“[...] You deal with the madmen. All men are mad in some way or the other, and inasmuch as you deal discreetly with your madmen, so deal with God’s madmen too, the rest of the world. You tell not your madmen what you do nor why you do it. You tell them not what you think. So you shall keep knowledge in its place, where it may rest, where it may gather its kind around it and breed.” (170)

Though Van Helsing initially uses this incommunicative philosophy to “deal with” Sir Arthur Holmwood, neglecting to tell him about his wife’s infection, Van Helsing and his acolytes begin to apply this negligent, dismissive philosophy to their treatment of the women of the novel, “keeping knowledge in its place” by consistently avoiding any explication of their situation to females characters. Out of concern for the mental constitution of Lucy, her

mother, and, later, Mina, the men of the story constantly withhold information from the women of the story (ironically, unknowingly further endangering their lives). They collectively decide not to tell Lucy of her mother's weak heart, furnishing Lucy the opportunity to ask her mother to sleep with her, leaving her mother vulnerable to fatal shock when Count Dracula inevitably invades the room. They decide not to tell Mrs. Westernra of Lucy's infection, in part of worry for her weak heart, so, when Van Helsing has discovered the perfect cure for Lucy's malady—stuffing the windows and draping Lucy's own person with ill-smelling flowers, creating a protective if stifling aura—Mrs. Westernra immediately removes the garlic and opens the door and windows, leaving Lucy completely vulnerable to the Count's incessant feedings and to death. By withholding information from the women, Bram Stoker's characters offer the same treatment to the women of the novel that they would extend to the insane.

Van Helsing is the most knowledgeable character within the novel, with other characters constantly flocking to him in confidence, "the poise of [his] head [. . .] at once [. . .] indicative of thought and power" (259). And rightly so, because, with his "hard, square chin," "large resolute, mobile mouth," and "big bushy brows," Van Helsing is, conceivably, the most masculine character within the novel. Not coincidentally, he is also the most rational, as he has "made [his] specialty the brain" (262). At one point, Dr. Seward attempts to "be stern with him, as one is to a woman under the circumstances" but to no avail. His ultra-masculinity and -rationality sets Van Helsing up as a direct foil to Count Dracula, "patient-zero" of the hyper-femininity movement, as Dracula has the power to almost grotesquely over-sexualize his (almost universally female) victims. Dracula himself is, to Jonathan, repulsively domestic; "making the bed," "laying the table in the dining room" (41), and broiling for his guest, among other things, "an excellent roast chicken" (26). Throughout the novel, Mina has the curious gift of extracting tears from her surrounding male friends, as "there is something in a woman's nature that makes a man free to break down before her and express his feelings on the tender or emotional side without feeling it derogatory to his manhood" (327). Curiously, Dracula, too, seems to have this cry-invoking ability, though in a different fashion: after Dracula finally man-

ages to infect Mina with vampirism, the naturally resolute and phlegmatic woman becomes much more susceptible to bouts of sadness, “crying” over small catalysts, “a new weakness” stemming from Dracula’s bite over which Mina decides she “must be careful” (371). Because Dracula seems to be the ultimate source of all displayed feminine attributes, and Stoker renders femininity synonymous with irrationality, Dracula also become the ultimate source of all displayed madness.

In “Hopkins’s Mind: Between Allegory and Madness,” critic Dennis Sobolev charts the descent into madness of mid-nineteenth century poet Gerard Manley Hopkins in his poem “I Wake and Feel the Darkness of the Day;” in the poem—as well as all of the poems in his collection of so-called “terrible sonnets”—Hopkins “represents his inner life as hell” by comparing his internal landscape, dark and burning, to that of John Milton’s underworld (34), “Hopkins’s topography of the mind echo[ing] Milton’s topography of hell” (35). Similarly, the countenance of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* is often described as “hellish” (413), and he himself a spawn of the “jaws of Hell” (451). The name for his kind, “vrolok” or “vlkoslak,” is used in the same breath as “stregoica” (*witch*), “Pokol” (*hell*), and “Ordog” (*Satan*) by the superstitious Transylvanian villagers that Jonathan encounters (9). As he senses his own “approaching madness,” Hopkins’s “stresses [his] tiredness and his desire for rest” (36)—“please let me rest for an hour”—just as Mina and Lucy emphasize their own perennial tiredness as they descend into vampirism; as such, in this reading, madness and vampirism are rendered tantamount. Dracula becomes the cause of both the sexuality and madness, which is why his supernaturalism renders him unforgivably irrational, why *Dracula* movie adaptations often rework the backstory of Renfield so that his madness is a direct consequence of past interaction with the Count. “Madness,” as Laura Jose notes in her article “Monstrous Conceptions: Sex, Madness and Gender in Medieval Medical Texts,” “actively transforms the male body into something approximating the female body” (Jose 154-5); Dracula, though hairy, and with an anti-feminine sharpness, with his “aquiline” visage, “thin nose” and “arched nostrils” (26), becomes the epitomal mad character within the novel.

Madness achieves its association with irrationality from a similar association with its conscious subversion of societal norms (Özdemir 57), “hysterical refusals [by the mad] to perform their gender roles” (Goldman 996); as they transform into Dracula’s vampire brides, both Mina and Lucy begin to behave in unsavory improper ways; Lucy most obviously, with her newfound carnal voluptuousness, becomes repugnant to the Crew of Light, a “devilish mockery,” a “nightmare” of their beloved Lucy (306), but Mina, too, becomes, in her own words “unclean, unclean!” (407). Their own subversion mirrors the subversion attributed to madness, cementing vampirism as a form of madness, one which can be contracted, a truly infectious disease, as “because Dracula transforms all the women in the story into vampires, the assumption can be made that vampirism—including its violent, sexual nature—originates in him” (Dionisopoulos 36). In the Middle Ages, madness was conceived as a feminine disorder that can, through female malice, be spread to the male population through exhibition of the female’s “voracious sexuality,” deliberately “infecting men with [the] burning disease” (Jose 158). Though the majority of medical practices evolved drastically in the intermediate period between the medieval age and the inception of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, there are several vestiges of medieval practices within *Dracula*. For example, as Laura Jose explains, it was commonly believed in the medieval era that “certain types of madness are regulated by the lunar cycle” (158), a stigma purported by Renfield in *Dracula*, as, at one point, he continuously becomes “violent all day then quiet from moonrise to sunrise” (Stoker 155). Furthermore, a “recurrent theme” in medieval medical texts is the need to “remove all images from the mad person’s presence” (Jose 157), including mirrors, as they would exacerbate the illness. As such, when Dracula spots Jonathan Harker’s shaving glass and “fl[i]ngs [it] out” the window (38), he is practically self-medicating.

In the medieval era, as Laura Jose emphasizes, there were concerns about the infectious qualities of madness, a defective feminine corruption of masculine well-being through transmission—mostly by touch, but also, even, by breathing the same air. The established sexuality of madness in conjunction with its relationship to “infection” sets up insanity as a potentially com-

municable disease; indeed, the majority of the “mad” characters, those characters who eschew social normalcy and acceptability at any point or are treated as mad—Mina, Lucy, Sir Arthur, Mrs. Westernra, the three brides, and, of course, Renfield—only exhibit their madness in direct response to interaction with the Count. This draws comparisons to fears of other sensually communicative diseases that plagued the populace of late nineteenth century England. The institution of the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866, and 1869 was a direct product of fears regarding the corruptive powers of “common prostitutes” (Walkowitz 74), as well as informed by “a fear of contagion” (75). Protestors of the Acts during the 1870s and 1880s distanced the idea of prostitution from the vice of deviancy; prostitution was argued as the “*rational choice*” for poor working-class women in an environment with “limited employment opportunities” (74).

Those protestors of the successive C. D. Acts of the mid 1800s also resented the implementation of the laws, as any woman even suspected of being common prostitutes were “registered, subjected to a periodical examination, and [. . .] incarcerated in a certified lock hospital” (75); however, the definition of what constitutes a common prostitute was “vague,” causing widespread issues of wrongful identification and accusation based solely on outward appearance. In court, being tried for prostitution, “the burden was on the woman to prove she was virtuous” (Walkowitz 74). This dialogues well with a similar stigma surrounding madness in the 1890s. Once one is labeled mad, as when once one is labeled a prostitute, it is difficult to prove the contrary. When Renfield summons Dr. Seward to his room to discuss, in purely phlegmatic terms, the possibility of his release, “keenly” “shaking hands” with each of the members of the vampire-hunting group, his speech and manner is “far more rational [. . .] than I [Dr. Seward] had ever seen him” (347). Dr. Seward recognizes the “unusual understanding of [Renfield’s] self [. . .] unlike anything [Dr. Seward] had ever met with in a lunatic” (347), but still, “brutally” (349), refuses R. M. Renfield’s staggeringly rational request, sure that “this sudden change of his entire intellectual method *was but yet another phase of his madness*” (emphasis added; 355). Dr. Seward immediately generalizes the mental condition of “all lunatics,” and, through this generalization, compartmentalizes the characters of the novel

into a strict (and absolutely inaccurate) binary of the sane and the insane. This is complicated by Dr. Seward's own admission about the different manifestations of insanity; if madness can appear in "phases"—confusing and behaviorally contradictory phases at that—then it becomes impossible to safely and accurately categorize madness at all. Mr. Renfield apparently has experienced several such "phases" of madness ("yet another"); can something so frequently changeable be clinically and resolutely defined?

Dr. Seward determines that Renfield's utter lack of any indication of mental disease is precisely what proves Renfield's mental instability; the "calm" in Renfield is "ominous" where that in Van Helsing is "reassuring." However, by that oddly tautological definition of madness—irrationality demonstrated by outward appearance of rationality—all of the principal characters exhibit the symptoms of madness. In *Dracula*, with its backdrop of the supremely irrational, the supernatural, madness becomes a highly subjective concept—and, as a result of the established parallel between sanity and gender, gender and femininity become similarly subjective. I am reminded of Norman Bates's outburst in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, after Marion has mistakenly suggested that he confine his mother to an insane asylum: "It's not like my mother is a maniac or a raving thing. She just goes a little mad sometimes. We all go a little mad sometimes. Haven't you?" (*Psycho*; 1960)

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The Feminist Case for Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

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Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is a complex tale which has filled an almost endless pool of literary criticism. Freudian psychological theory, for example, has been utilized by many critics to interpret the novel, including Joyce Carol Oates in her journal article "Jekyll/Hyde." Some critics have read Stevenson's work through the lens of power relations, such as Adam Capitanio who links Jekyll's power with emerging scientific discoveries in the Victorian era. Many gender-based interpretations of the novella also exist, especially regarding the sexuality of Dr. Jekyll.; some critics, such as Louise Welsh in her article "Sympathy for the Devil," believe him to be homosexual. Additionally, Ed Cohen, in his articles "Hyding the Subject" and "The Double Lives of Man," relates the skewed perceptions of male sexuality in *Jekyll and Hyde*. Thus, while many critics have read Stevenson's work through a queer theory filter, suggesting the subverted homosexuality within this text, the story also encodes a gender perspective that is often neglected. In this tragic tale of breakdown and dissociation, the absence of women may be read in two ways. Recently, Louise Welsh has used the lack of women to support a queer reading. She suggests that such a lack may have driven "Jekyll to create Hyde to sin for him in proxy," (3). Jekyll is so weak and so unable to tolerate the lack of nurturing characters in his life that he, therefore, may have created Hyde—who is shunned by society because of his physical malformations and intolerable behavior—as a secret outlet to release his homosexual repression. Welsh continues, "Stevenson's awkwardness in drawing female characters could be responsible for their absence" (3). Another interpretation of the female's absence may be that Stevenson is illustrating the importance of women by revealing the duality and horrors of a homosexual world without them.

This seemingly muted, yet tangible feminist approach is evident in the history of the work itself, as demonstrated in Stevenson's decision to heed his wife's advice. Balfour Graham explains that after Mrs. Stevenson read the novella and told her husband that he had treated the allegory that he wrote as though it were only a story, Robert burned it and rewrote the whole draft with his wife's advice in mind (78). The fact that this author took seriously his wife's opinion during the nineteenth century—a period when women, after all, were still being treated as legally and socially inferior to men—supports the possibility that *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* should be interrogated more seriously for its feminist perspectives. Stevenson's bias toward females is also evident yet subdued in the diction of the story, as can be deciphered through deconstructive feminist criticism.

As deconstructive critics have pointed out, absence may signify the importance of something just as much as its presence does. Throughout the story, men's psychological instabilities are expressed and revealed explicitly. Moreover, nowhere in the story is a wife, daughter, mother, or sister ever mentioned, and the only intimate relationship that exists in the story is between Utterson and his distant cousin Enfield. One can make a list of men's psychological inadequacies: Utterson, Lanyon, and Enfield are too logical, and Jekyll is so afraid to expose his inner self that he creates a potion that allows him to become Hyde when he wants to express his ugly qualities. These instabilities that males exhibit may be linked to the lack of female figures in their lives. Conversely, women's psychological problems are never illustrated. However, a double reading of this absence may reveal women's importance.

How can one read *The Strange Case of Jekyll and Hyde* as a story that covertly empowers women? It is useful to reflect on the basic foundational principles of feminist literary criticism in pursuing this reading; as Ann Dobie, in her book *Theory into Practice*, asserts,

The common thread... is the belief that the social organization has denied equal treatment to all its [female] segments and that literature is a means of revealing and resisting that social order. To them, art and life are fused

entities, making it the duty of the critic to work against stereotyping in literature, media, and public awareness; to raise the consciousness of those who are oppressed; and to bring about radical change in the power balance between the oppressors [men] and the oppressed [women] (115).

Evidence of Stevenson's disruption of the Victorian power balance, which normally favored men, is evident in his story. Moreover, the currently established queer criticism on *Jekyll and Hyde* may be the key to legitimizing and strengthening my own thesis—Jekyll's homosexuality, makes men appear all the more unbalanced. This instability could be the result of a lack of wives, mothers, and other nurturing female figures.

In his journal article "The Double Lives of Man," Ed Cohen fittingly remarks:

Coming out [of normal sexuality] was clearly not a possibility available to the late Victorians. [...] As men sought to represent their heretofore unrepresentable affective and erotic experiences, they articulated stories within which their manifest maleness was overridden by another narrative trajectory that sought to circumvent the binary logistics of sex and gender. Hence, these late-Victorian men engendered new possibilities for articulating—if not embodying—sexual and emotional relations outside the naturalized opposition of sex by imagining new narrative modes that encompassed non-unitary modes of male subjectivity (355-6).

Stevenson circumvented these normal "binary logistics" by concocting a setting where women's frustrations are conspicuously ignored while men are apparently weak and lacking, and therefore they succumb to violent—and possibly homosexual—behavior. Stevenson recognized and addressed the differences between men and women in one of his letters, linking this duality back to the characters in the *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*:

I had long been trying to write a story on this subject [duality], to find a body, a vehicle for that strong sense

of man's double being which must at times come in upon him and overwhelm the mind of every thinking creature (90).

Through the characters Jekyll and Hyde, Stevenson prophetically illustrates what damage this "overwhelming" duality can do in a world evolving from the nineteenth century's safe haven of normal sexuality and into the vast obscurities and dangers of the twentieth. Stevenson may have created his male characters to exhibit a dualism in their sexual orientation in order to further illustrate their confusion in a Victorian world that does not openly approve of sexual dissenters.

Additionally, although Stevenson himself never exhibited abnormal sexuality, he describes in this same letter the incompleteness one can feel because of the lack of companionship from the opposite gender:

All night long, he [Stevenson] brushed by single persons passing downward... poor scarecrows of men, pale parodies of women—but all drowsy and weary like himself, and all single, all brushing against him as they passed (88).

Could Stevenson have labeled these single men as "scarecrows" and the single women as "pale parodies of women" because they are single and therefore incomplete? Maybe these specific images symbolize that when men are lonely for long enough, their psychological environment begins to manifest itself into a physical change—much like what happened to Jekyll when he became Hyde—a character whose physical abnormality is similar to that of a scarecrow. Further, maybe women's loneliness leads them not into a physical change, but a "parody"—an imitation—of real life because they "pale" and stifle their desire for men in order to protect themselves from the physical transformations and psychological pains of being alone. Stevenson's metaphor for the female's ability to suppress her emotion and move on with life even though she is alone versus the man's inability to move past his loneliness is yet another example of how this author ironically portrays women as more able to cope with their circumstances than men during an era when women were usually undermined..

The only women in the story are a victimized little girl, a maid, and a maid servant who witnesses Hyde's savage murder; none of the women is even given a name. However, these seemingly insignificant characters become important and powerful, and the situations they are associated in make Hyde—the male involved in every scene these women are in—appear abnormal and unstable.

Although the little girl whom Hyde attacks appears to be a defenseless little victim on the surface, upon closer inspection, it becomes evident that she is not so unprotected because her family and society rush to her aid after the attack, and Hyde is on the receiving end of their retaliation. This scene also sheds light on Hyde's perversion. When Hyde encounters her, he "trampled calmly over the girl's body and left her screaming on the ground" (9). When Enfield comes to the girl's defense, Hyde was "perfectly cool and made no resistance" (9). This behavior could be a view into Hyde's inner unstable, corrupted self because he shows no remorse for his brutal, unjustified attack. Moreover, the family's ability to ruin Hyde's reputation leaves him in a position of weakness. He states, "If you choose to make capital of this incident, I am naturally helpless . . . Name your figure" (10). Stevenson could have chosen to frame the story in a way that did not bring justice to the little girl and that did not demand that Hyde be punished. However, Stevenson's decision to allow the family to have control over Hyde's reputation and his apparent docility to their demands shows the power that the family, and ultimately the girl, have over him. Hyde's barbaric actions reveal his instability, and the family's control over him reveals the bias toward females that Stevenson illustrates in the novel.

In another one of his articles, "Hyding the Subject," Cohen reveals an additional feminist reading of the attack scene when he explains:

It is sufficient to note that this . . . scandal provided the occasion for publically renegotiating the value accorded to male sexuality precisely at the moment when it transgressed the boundaries of proper masculinity by manifesting blatant violence against women (184).

Cohen's comment that Hyde's masculinity has "transgressed" past the acceptable threshold may affirm that Hyde's lack of masculinity caused him to manifest "blatant violence against women" (184). In trying to prove his manliness by hurting a weaker member of society, Hyde ironically illustrates how weak he truly is.

Another supposedly insignificant character in Stevenson's story is Mr. Hyde's maid. Although seemingly benign, she is not described as being defenseless and obedient, but as "an ivory-faced and silvery-haired old woman [who] had an evil face, smoothed by hypocrisy; but her manners were excellent" (23). Read through a feminist filter, this description does not reveal a quiet old maid, but a strong woman who is able to manipulate people with her "excellent manners" and still engage in acts of hypocrisy. Additionally, even though she is not shown in a positive light, nowhere in Stevenson's description of the maid does he allude that she might be mentally unsound, as Hyde seems to be. In fact, Stevenson uses the maid's information to explicate Hyde's abnormality, as she states: "[Hyde's] habits were very irregular, and he was often absent; for instance, it was nearly two months since she had seen him till yesterday" (23). Interestingly, this important information is revealed by none other than the old woman. Moreover, when the maid finds out that Hyde is in trouble, she makes no effort to hide the "odious joy that appeared on [her] face" (24). She even has the audacity to ask what crime Hyde had committed. When read from a female power perspective, these details may be clues that portray Stevenson's desire to prove that women, even lowly old maids, can be just as potent as men. Additionally, the author uses the maid as the instrument through which to color not the woman's psychologically unstable character, but Hyde's.

The only person who witnesses Hyde savagely murder Carew is a lowly maid servant. Stevenson's decision to make this woman the only witness to the murder is evidence in support of a feminist reading because had she not observed the murder, no witnesses would exist. The woman made "the guilt of Hyde patent to the world..." (57). This scene not only reveals that Stevenson allowed a woman to reveal the truth, but also that he juxtaposed the woman's calmness and normal psychological stance with Hyde's violent rage and psychological instability. The woman had been gazing calmly out her window that night, "at peace with all men..."

thinking kindly of the world,” (21) while Hyde “broke out in a great flame of anger, stamping with his foot, brandishing the cane, and carrying on like a madman” (22). Stevenson could have chosen a man to be the witness, or he could have chosen for the male authorities not to trust the woman’s testimony, or he could have chosen for the woman to be too afraid to testify. However, Stevenson’s decision to portray the woman in a positive light and as strong enough to testify against a man suggests Stevenson’s confidence in female empowerment.

In his story *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Robert Lewis Stevenson illustrates three beautiful counter examples to the Victorian belief that women are inferior and powerless in a society ruled by men. In fact, Stevenson regarded women so highly that he burnt the first draft of the story when his wife disapproved of it; he even rewrote it with his wife’s advice in mind. Moreover, as Doane and Hodges explicate, the tale

[i]s about collaboration between the masculine and feminine that subverts the identity of each. Written at a time when gender roles were shifting, this story lacks coherent representations of sexuality despite its seeming emphasis on an emphatically male society (63).

In support of and to add to their argument, this emphasis on male society may be Stevenson’s way of foreseeably illustrating the shift in the female’s role from inferiority into not only equality but in fact superiority as the nineteenth century was coming to an end. Perhaps Linda Dryden explains Stevenson’s innovative approach the best when she recognizes that “the fragmentation of personality that occurs in *Jekyll and Hyde* suggests that Stevenson was a writer on the brink of modernism” (75). When the tale is read in a deconstructive and feminist criticism lens, nearly every female position is transformed from one of inferiority into one of power and stability in a world where men usually triumph.

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“Just the two of us, you and me”: Feminist Narratology and the Masculinized Collective in Joshua Ferris’s *Then We Came to the End*

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Narratology, like all literary criticism, has come into and out of the swing of fashion since Tzvetan Todorov neologized a name for it in his *Décameron*. Like literary criticism, too, narratology is subject to its own branching evolutions and, consequently, it deconstructs itself as it diverges from (and even reinterprets and edits) its structuralist lineage. As a product of structuralist literary studies, narratology has conceived of itself as endeavoring to understand that which constitutes the many parts that create and become the text, and central to the move behind the creation of a structuralist narrative taxonomy has been, descending out of Todorov’s “grammar”¹ of plot, the development of, as critic Jonathan Culler aptly suggests, “a poetics which would stand to literature as linguistics stands to language” (Culler 8). Indeed, as Andrew Gibson notes in his deconstructive appraisal of narrative theory, narratology is entrenched in its adherence to a “geometrisation of textual space” (3) that often works to “universalise and essentialise the structural phenomena supposedly uncovered” (5). Imbued in the “geometric schematisation”² (Gibson 5) of narrative, then, is a peculiarly patriarchal methodology for analyzing narrative structure that relies upon distinctly masculine systemizations (seen especially in the masculine geometrizations that make up most of narratology (Gibson 120).

Significantly, just as there is not a singular agreeable (and explicit) definition for what narratology is, feminist narratology has not clearly defined itself and continues to evolve into its own variant branches; nevertheless, a definition is written rather succinctly by Ruth E. Page in *Literary and Linguistic Approaches to Narratology*, wherein Page asserts that “[f]eminist narratology is

not [...] a separate set of feminist narrative models, but is better understood as the feminist critique of narratology [...] which operates on the basis of feminist applications of narrative theory to a range of texts that goes beyond the corpus originally drawn upon by the early structuralist work" (5). Thus, it is not a replacement for masculine/structuralist techniques, or a reappropriating "boost" to "geometrics" as Gibson seems to suggest (120); it is a reified alternative to Genettian (and other structuralist idealizations) of geometric/taxonomical models.

Feminist narratology is particularly useful, therefore, in analyzing a work that also resists the patriarchal geometrizations of structural analyses in and of itself. The first-person-pluralized narrative structure employed by *Then We Came to the End* wriggles out of the rather neat and clean classifications imposed by structuralist narratology (which again both implicitly and, at times, explicitly "essentialise[s]" structuralist geometrizations (Gibson 5)) because it is an atypical narrative that rebounds against masculine, conventional narrative modes. Set at an ad-agency in Chicago, the text describes the collective humor and communal tragedy inherent in the lives of the agency's office workers at a time when the American Dream seems increasingly abstract and ever intangible. The office workers themselves are the pluralized narrator telling the story, "focalizing"³ the narration through an oral, around-the-water-cooler style account of their lives in the office. However, infused into *Then We Came to the End*'s narrative technique is a subtle critique—the narrative "we" is a feminist (or anti-masculine) collective form that rejects the conventional masculine hierarchy enacted between narrator/character/reader (e.g., that which exists between an omniscient, deistic narrator who sees, knows, and dictates, and the wide-eyed reader), but the collective still ultimately fails a number of marginalized characters within the novel because the ad-agency's collective voice is a subversively masculinized one, appropriated for the purposes of patriarchal capitalism.⁴

Viewed objectively and outside of the context of the ad-agency in which the text takes place, the narrative form is revisionary of masculine conventions and, thus, markedly postmodern in its departure from tradition and that which is for Molly Hite⁵ the conventional novel's "masculine discourse" (Hite 6). Departing

from the masculine model, *Then We Came to An End* acknowledges its own inclusive, pluralized voice at the very beginning of the novel, beginning mid-thought and opening with a paragraph that is encapsulatory of the multifaceted voice(s) blended throughout the novel:

We were fractious and overpaid. Our mornings lacked promise. At least those of us who smoked had something to look forward to at ten-fifteen. Most of us liked most everyone, a few of us hated specific individuals, one or two people loved everyone and everything. Those who loved everyone were unanimously reviled. We loved free bagels in the morning. They happened all too infrequently. [...] We thought moving to India might be better, or going back to nursing school. Doing something with the handicapped or working with our hands. No one every acted on these impulses, despite their daily, sometimes hourly contractions. Instead we met in conference rooms to discuss the issues of the day. (Ferris 3)

Accordingly, the narrative-we presents its narrative in such a way that each office worker collectively contributes to the narration while also retaining her/his individuality within the novel. In this way, Ferris' novel rejects conventionality—perhaps it is better put to suggest that it rebounds from it—allowing for the dismissal of other rooted conventions, because the collective voice of the narrator engenders a deconstruction of ingrained expectations for what a narrator is/does/should be. One sees this in the overt inclusiveness of all characters into the tour de force of its first-person plural narration, which remains in place and sustained (save for a single, purposeful section in the middle of the novel); likewise, the rejection of the masculine form is evident in the novel's ultimate rejection of the patriarchal/hierarchical relationship that ratifies an authoritarian dynamic between the narrator and the reader, in that it offers an “other side of the story” version of narrative (Hite 9).

Similarly thorough, as Ferris's Emerson epigraph reads, “[i]t is not the chief disgrace of the world not to be a unit;—not to be reckoned one character [...],” and the narrative-we works to

include every office worker's voice, digressing into as many individualized stories as there are characters. But it is in the various digressions that the collective voice becomes so important, because each of the narrator's digressions makes up and contributes to the overarching story and, consequently, each character is of equal importance to the narrator because each character is the narrator, even while the narrator is reporting the speech of that character or suggesting how a character feels or what s/he thinks. This departs radically from Genettian (and most structuralists') conceptions of the character/narrator relationship, wherein the narrators'/characters' focalizations fall into a "three-term [Todorovian] typology" with specific qualifications inherent to each—"Narrator > Character" (which is the often termed omniscient narrator, or, for Genette, "nonfocalized narrative"); "Narrator = Character (the narrator only says what a given character knows)," which is a kind of "internal focalization"; and "Narrator < Character" (wherein the characters' thoughts, actions, motives, etc. are obscured from the seeing eye of the narrator, which is what Genette labels "external focalization") (Genette, *Discourse* 188-189). Genette does admit later in *Narrative Discourse Revisited* that his original categorizations of "who sees" (aimed at finding a reflector) and "who speaks" (Genette, *Discourse* 186) are perhaps "too visual," so he revises the question to ask "who perceives?"⁶ (*Discourse Revisited* 64). However, this clarification does not recognize the hermeneutics of a systemization such as his that strip meaning from the narratological process. As one might perceive, these Todorovian-Genettian typologies of focalization exemplify the rigid masculinist hierarchy endemic to the traditional novel, each of them denoting a specific kind of hierarchical power relationship that simply does not include *Then We Came to the End's* narrative-we, which is not definable in the context of structuralist taxonomy—but what about in the context of distinctly feminist narratology? To suggest either way precludes the possibility for a feminist discussion of the need for—as Lidia Curti asserts it—"systemic totality" or binaries that are either/or or yes/no in the first place (Curti 31).

Much in the mode that it defies an easy classification, *Then We Came to the End's* noticeable "pluralizing" of voice, rooted in the feminist ideal of a more "discursive authority"⁷ that controverts

“old, patriarchal forms of authority” (Gibson 156-157), implicitly erodes the structuralist model simply because the narrative does not fit so easily within the model. In the context of Ferris’s novel, Genette’s questions for pinpointing focalization, “who sees,” “who tells,” and where *is* the narrator become indistinct (Genette, *Discourse* 189-190). A poignant example is a passage, early in the novel, in which the narrator—a “narrative-we,” which is also an “experiencing-I,” complicating many narrative theorists (such as David Herman’s) very general differentiation (*Elements* 58)—is contrasting the office’s palpable melancholia with surprising fundamental kindness:

That we might struggle to make rent or a mortgage payment was a real and frightening prospect. Yet we were still alive, we had to remember that. The Sun still shone in as we sat at our desks. Certain days it was enough just to look out at the clouds and at the tops of buildings. We were buoyed by it, momentarily. It made us “happy.” We could even turn uncommonly kind. Take, for instance, the time we smuggled Old Golds into Frank Brizzolera’s hospital room [a dying, cancer-ridden smoker]. Or when we attended the funeral of Janine Gorjanc’s little girl [...] (17).

Frank Brizzolera and Janine Gorjanc are each characters within the office; thus, they are each a part of the pronominal narrative-we. But at the same time, they *are* events within the narration—or at least, each action within the narration (taking Frank his cigarettes and attending Janine’s daughter’s funeral, for instance)—and are, consequently, detached from the collective because the collective is involved in a viewing/telling of (or about) them. This blending between narrator and character and the emergence of a collective, harmonious voice to which almost all of the office workers contribute overtly complicates Mieke Bal’s (and the revisionary post-structuralists’) clarification of focalization, wherein she confirms the importance of “narrative perspective” in focalization, emphasizing that narratology has too often not “ma[d]e a distinction between those who see and those who speak” (146). However, a “distinction” cannot be effectively

made between “who sees” and “who speaks” (Bal 149) in *Then We Came to the End*, because, unless it is an instance of reported, quoted speech, there is never a single voice speaking or a single set of eyes observing—it is always the collective in its entirety. But there is a sense of doubleness in this apparent paradox, too, in that each character literally embodies the collective while remaining thoroughly removed—i.e., s/he retains autonomy over her/his identity within the generalizing, collective voice representing the ad-agency’s workers, all while remaining irrevocably part of the narrative-we (note: there are characters who are distinctly separate from the plural pronominal, as well, which will be discussed later). Doubleness, or simultaneous character/narratorial identity is illustrated, for example, in the way the office describes Janine Gorjanc mourning over her daughter’s death and the spectacle that the office has made of it:

Over the course of the next few weeks, practically everyone made it over to the McDonald’s. If Karen couldn’t go, they went without her. That is to say, *we* went without her. You see, everyone was talking about it. It wasn’t something you could afford to miss. You *had* to go [...] You stood in front of the bathroom door [...] and spied the unmistakable, hunched figure of Janine Gorjanc—sometimes staring off at nothing [...] You went so that when you got back to the office, you, too, could testify that you had seen it—Janine Gorjanc in the pool of plastic balls—and what a peculiar sight it was. (131)

The narrator’s curious meta-shifts between the pronouns “they” and “we” and “you” very nearly topple the hulking remnants of the novel’s already crumbling fourth wall. The narrative-we acknowledges itself, as it does again and again throughout the novel, and then qualifies its own observations. The narrator betrays, too, an awareness of audience and what for Manfred Jahn is its own “online [and] offline perceptions”⁸ (99), but it is never above contradicting itself in a fashion that admits its own probable myopia, asserting, for example, at one point that “[o]ne thing we knew for certain—despite all our certainties, it was very difficult to guess what one individual was thinking at any given moment” (18),

which comes into direct conflict with a declaration later about Amber's secret pregnancy, where the narrative-we admits "[s]he wasn't showing, we shouldn't have known the first thing about [her pregnancy], but we did because we knew everything" (55). Or there is the insertion of a paradox directly into a sentence: "Practically everyone shared their thoughts with Benny because everyone loved Benny, which was why some of us hated his guts" (Ferris 59). Such idiosyncrasies, so pervasive throughout the text and coupled with a form of what feminist theorist Susan Lanser would call a "communal voice" that makes itself into a "plurality" (*Fictions* Lanser 257) create swaths of gray in a structuralist/patriarchal taxonomy that prefers a universal black/white that clearly defines "system of figures and conventions that enable works to have the forms and meanings they do" (Culler 8). Regardless of the structuralist intent to remove itself from a hermeneutic narratology, a kind of interpretation ensues that is irrespective of the idealized nature of a typical geometric investigation devoid of interpretation.

While it may be the case that *Then We Came to the End* is, in and of itself, a feminist text in its opposition to/contravention of the patriarchal hegemony over narrative structure, a feminist narratology would recognize that nothing is truly in and of itself. "Stories in the modern sense are always *somebody's* stories," says Hite, denoting the power of the personal in narrative; "they entail a point of view, take sides" (4). Despite the idealism imposed by structuralist models, there is a fundamental part of narrative analysis that requires the acknowledgement, too, that "[n]arratives are human activities" and "human constructions" that cannot be scrutinized and geometrized objectively (Page, *Narratology* 1). A feminist narratological analysis of *Then We Came to the End* would not and could not effectively examine the text without indulging in a treatment of its content because fundamentally its content—the narrative discourse itself, that which the narrative-we reports—*informs* the method in which the narrative is constructed. Thus, a kind of hermeneutical approach even for narratology is necessary, even if it does redefine narratology and reshape it into what for Bal is "an act of cultural analysis" (12).

It is such the case that *Then We Came to the End's* narrative structure *does* appear to be directly informed by the content of its

narrative, because intrinsic to the novel's narrative—we is a subtle critique of the ad-agency's patriarchal *masculinization* of the collective for the purposes of patriarchal capitalism. The once-feminine valued collective is seized upon for the production of profit, and the teams work together out of a fear of layoffs, out of anxiety that they are really “mismanaged inventory” to be “dumped like a glut of imported circuit boards” (Ferris 19). There is nothing in the valuing of teamwork, of human connection in the collective, that is truly feminist because the communal has been cleverly subverted by patriarchal capitalism. For Heather Hicks, this patriarchal expropriation of the feminine is the problem of a corporate world that now promotes “a set of management techniques that privilege irrationality, intuition, fluidity, faith, and emotion” and markets them to its employees with a curiously male spin, implying and even asserting that these are inherently the traits of “masculine genius” (Hicks 1-2). This is especially relevant for Hicks in the modern business world where “hard work” has been replaced with “soft work” and “an economy sustained by software, soft bodies, and soft management techniques” (3). Economist and professor Guy Standing's 1999 essay “Global Feminization Through Flexible Labor: A Theme Revisited” provides a suitable grounding for Hicks's observations:

The types of employment and labor force involvement traditionally associated with women—insecure, low-paid, irregular, etc.—have been spreading relative to the type of employment traditionally associated with men—regular, unionized, stable, manual or craft-based, etc. In addition, women have been entering, re-entering and remaining in the labor force to a growing extent. A third trend is that more men have been forced into the margins of the labor market, if not out of it altogether (Standing 600).

Standing's remarks in 1999 are prescient for the crux of the chief events in *Then We Came to the End*, all of which come just as the corporate world slinks into “a new century” (Ferris 3). Women have not simply entered and remained in the workplace; the corporate monoliths are cognizant of the feminization of the low-level corporate world, and the spreading of “soft labor” that

is now so ubiquitous in the workplace (Hicks 3). It has become necessary, then, for patriarchal capitalism—despite its obvious devaluing of the female and its preferred relegation of women to the roles of consumers and domestics—to “restore the masculine credibility of work” by subverting the necessary feminine traits inherent in successful soft work (synergy, collectivity, sensitivity) and subversively masculinizing them (Hicks 3).

In *Then We Came to the End*, one sees the obvious symptoms of this overt subversion at first in the layoffs that plague the ad-agency, because after an employee is dismissed during the narrative one does not see him/her again. Characters very often fade into a kind of nonexistence outside of the office workers’ collective. There is no perpetuity to the office collective—it is a means to an end, to an eventual place in capitalist America where “vital parts of the American dream” cannot be “foreclosed upon” (Ferris 160). The notion of being “walked Spanish down the hall” permeates the text as a metaphor for being fired or laid off, and in this there is formed a distinct separation between those who have been fired and those who have not. Names literally vanish from the text never to be revisited, and the othering of the unemployed characters in the collective remains permanent—their voices are forever ripped out of the narrative-we and transformed into vague outliers that are never to return. For example, after Tom Mota’s layoff and subsequent breakdown, the collective considers (the pregnant Amber Ludwig foremost among them) the possibility of Tom’s return and whether or not it could be a violent, vengeful return:

Amber was outvoted. We knew Tom. We knew Alan Glew, Linda Blanton, Paul Saunier. We knew Neil Hotchkiss and Cora Lee Brower and Harold Oak. They weren’t any of them coming back here with a nightmare in a backback. They had been let go. They packed their things. They left us for good, never to return (Ferris 24).

Aside from Tom’s name, the employees that the narrative-we considers are never mentioned again for the duration of the novel. Tom does return, despite the narrative-we’s insistence that it “knew” him, and for the rest of the names considered, the brief contemplation about their potential non-malevolence

is quite literally a final sendoff. The collective is true to its word, and the once-mentioned names really are “never to return” (24); thus, job-loss in the world of the text yields a form of oblivion and nonexistence that denotes the collective’s inability to preserve its own solidarity. This is apparent too in the novel’s last chapter, which features a years-later reunion that takes place after Hank Neary (who is, throughout most of the text, a failed novelist) “[manages] to track us down, scattered as we were” and invites the old ad-agency collective to a reading of his just-published book (370). Despite the narrative-we’s admission that “we had to believe in our hearts that each one of us was memorable” (369), few of the individuals are so fortunate:

Most of us recalled in a general way this person or that, their features exaggerated by memory, their names lost forever. Of others we could pull up only the murkiest general outline, as if rather than walking past them in the hall a hundred times a day, we’d encountered them in a cloud once, mumbled polite exchange, and moved on [...] As for us, it was never a worry. We would never be forgotten by anyone. (369)

For the collective, then, the solidarity inherent in teamwork is not enduring. It is, again, the selective “feminization” of work into “soft work” (Hicks 8) for the purposes of white male capitalist power and perpetuation. This central point differs from one of Hicks’s larger implications, because this false-feminization is not a true “new economic order” for encroaching upon “white men whose masculinity is threatened” (13), but is instead patriarchal appropriation at its most innovative. Those who are no longer of use to patriarchal capitalism, thenceforth, are “forced [...] out of [the labor market] altogether” (Standing 600).

While those who leave are forced to leave the collective are consigned to the margins (which is oblivion), the narrative-we displays a powerful proclivity for othering individual characters who remain fundamentally tied to the office and to the events of the text narrated by the collective. As it has already been posited, the narrative-we’s multilayered voice—that which is for Lan-ser a “plural voice that narrates collective perceptions” (*Fictions*

256)—includes the voices of characters who also take part in the events that are being reported. However, in identifying the limitations and the overt masculinization of the collective voice, and in identifying the overt and covert failures of the narrative—we’s attempt at inclusivity, it is perhaps more important to examine those characters in the text who are never at any point *part of* the narrative—we despite their participation in the text’s events. One might begin with Lynn Mason, the partner-level boss from whom the office workers receive their assignments, and the person to whom they submit their work for approval. She represents the conspicuous separation of the average employee from the one who holds power over his/her employment; that is, a metonymic stand-in for the demands of the corporate powers-that-be, as well as the ability of capitalist power to sever one’s tie to the company at any given moment. “Sure she was the one walking everyone Spanish down the hall,” admits the narrative—we, “but she hadn’t walked any of *us* Spanish down the hall yet—and that was an important distinction” (48). But she is also forever a separate entity from the collective that paradoxically claims to have “[known] everything” (55), and not one individual seems to have any insight into her thoughts or emotions. Throughout the entirety of the text, Lynn is the subject of a cancer rumor that cannot be traced back to any particular source—no one quite knows where it began or how it started, and, more broadly, the narrative—we often muses more generally on Lynn’s personality:

It seemed pretty clear we were all wondering what Lynn Mason did at night when she went home. Did she watch TV, or did she think TV was a waste of time? What hobbies did she have? Or had she sacrificed hobby-having to professional ambition? Did she exercise? [...] Did she have a history of cancer in the family? Who was her family? Who were her friends? [...] And how did she feel, being in her forties, never having been married? (118).

While Lynn’s power and demeanor intimidate the narrative—we, she remains an elusive, shadowy outline of a figure at which the collective marvels, as well as an indefinite entity that the office fears. Even when Lynn arrives at work on the day she is due for

surgery, the narrative-we makes an immediate spectacle of her because it cannot fathom how she is present on the day they know she is not supposed to be there. Sightings of her are the subject of instantaneous scrutiny, and each individual who sees her contributes right away to the collective's compilation of information. Reporting Benny Shassburger's speech, the narrative-we claims "[s]he was sitting on top of one of the cubicle desks [...] with her legs hanging down" (151). The characters are almost giddy with information, keen to report that "[s]he was just *zonked out*. She had to have heard me, but she didn't look up" (151), and despite that it is later confirmed that Lynn *does* have cancer, *does* later have surgery, the information remains a part of the collective's exotic gossip about Lynn, who is for the office workers always a tenuous abstraction rather than a feeling, living human. Her place as an othered outlier in the ad-agency is complicated by a centerpiece chapter in the novel that is about Lynn in its entirety—it is the only section of the text that moves from the first-person-we to third-person narration, following the story of Lynn's breakdown the night before she is scheduled for a mastectomy. However, what would at first materialize as a chapter of re-empowerment, a chapter that bends the narration itself to a moment of voice that is Lynn's and Lynn's alone, is further complicated and controverted by the later revelation that it is not Lynn's actual voice or Lynn's exact story—it is part of Hank Neary's published book, the very one that members of the collective gather to hear him read at the end of the text. Hank admits

[...] 'I knew she was sick, so I went to see her. Just on a Lark. Because what did I know about her? Nothing, really. I didn't know her—not in any meaningful way. And it turns out she was very open to talking with me, not only about her sickness, but also her personal life [...]' (377).

The realization inflicted upon the reader that the interlude featuring Lynn is not her own story about the night before her operation—that the recorded thoughts were not hers—is arguably jarring. One is not made privy to this element until lines of Hank Neary's reported speech as he reads his novel are literally transplanted from Lynn's chapter to the text's final chapter, un-

derscoring in particular the fact that even then Lynn is the subject of literary speculation and the Lynn one hears speaking, both the reflector and the one “who orients,” or, the important “focal character” (Genette, *Discourse* 189), is very probably the result of a literary license and not testimony in its purest form. Thus, even Lynn’s story—her one hold on the narrative—is not wholly her own. Hank reports, too, that “Lynn died in the summer of 2003 [...] [o]f ovarian cancer,” and the collective seems utterly surprised at the news (377).

Almost as removed from the collective as Lynn, Joe Pope is likewise othered by the narrative-we. Joe’s is an awkward position. He is not a partner like Lynn, so he is, as he puts it, “caught somewhere between being a partner, and being the guy in the cubicle” (254). Rather than being othered distinctly because of his place in relation to the ad-agency’s other employees, Joe is an outlier because of his difference and because of his refusal to become a part of the scrutinizing collective. Accordingly, Joe is the constant target of pranks and insults that he weathers without significant complaint. Rumors about his sexual orientation lead to Tom Mota writing “FAG” on his cubicle wall, and then later on

[a] few people [...] had gotten their hands on a roll of yellow plastic biohazard tape and given Joe’s office a good dressing. Whether he ever figured out the insinuations being made by that particular tape—that as a ‘fag,’ he was a carrier of unpleasant disease—was unknown. In fact, he never discussed the event. He just removed the tape [...] [and] carried on as though nothing had happened (125).

Thus, Joe-as-a-target emphasizes the collective’s dis-ease with his difference and his peculiar kind of nonconformity. Instead, the narrative-we wonders “[w]as it really so crazy [...] to suggest that Joe had done it himself? Maybe [...] he had a persecution complex” (126). Like its inability to fathom the imperceptible, abstract Lynn, the collective cannot peer into the mind of Joe in the same way it can examine the thoughts and emotions of the communal voice, of its own “*simultaneous voice*” (Lanser 257), and so it makes a cyclical spectacle of Joe too. Interestingly, Joe steps out of his place as a figure of patriarchal capitalist author-

ity (which is not concrete authority, but merely because of his closeness to Lynn and indefinite way in which his position rests above the other office workers) to scold the collective—not for its abuse directed toward him—for the spectacles it so often makes of marginalized characters like Lynn and Janine Gorjanc. Despite that it is a collective who speaks, whose “plural narration” (Lanser 257) should be offering positive “multiple stories [...] contributing to a fuller portrait of a specific community” (Lanser 263), it is Joe Pope who recognizes the unfair place of the marginalized, and his decision to speak for those whose voices are unincluded is perhaps one of the most feminist actions in the entire text. His relegation to the indefinite edges of the narrative, though, condemns him to oblivion—unlike Lynn, not even Hank Neary knows what has become of Joe Pope, and the last lines of the text leave the reader just as unaware, fading out as Benny Shassburger asks again and again—“‘[w]here’s Joe Pope?’ [...] ‘What happened to Joe?’” (384).

Ultimately, the novel’s narration fails marginalized characters like Lynn and Joe and even Janine-in-mourning (who are all sometimes othered, sometimes victimized) in the manner that the capitalist ad-agency still fails even those who do precisely what patriarchal capitalism requires. The narrative—we’s false collectivity is a correlative for the false-femininity in the modern workplace. Again, as Hicks’s shrewdly points out, corporate capitalism now operates in a “socioeconomic formation” that “has realigned the signifiers of economic production with those of femininity” (Hicks 3) for the purpose of propagating patriarchal capitalism’s own success, wealth, and permanence. *Then We Came to the End*’s narrative stands, then, not as an anti-masculine narrative, but as a text that, through the utilization of a masculinized collective—we that perpetuates patriarchal marginalization and ostracism, *critiques* the patriarchal appropriation of the feminine/Marxist collective. The collective is still not inclusive, and othered characters are left to ruin, isolation, and oblivion because the collective is a patriarchal subversion, because in the masculinization of the feminine/Marxist collective, it is recognizable that, as Donna Haraway¹⁰ cites her essay “Cyborg Manifesto” (whom Hicks cites as well)

Work is being redefined as both literally female and feminized, whether performed by men or women. To be feminized means to be made extremely vulnerable; able to be disassembled, reassembled, exploited as a reserve labor force; seen less as workers than as servers; subjected to time arrangements on and off the paid job that make a mockery of a limited work day (Haraway 133).

The collective fails to articulate the experiences of the marginalized and it fails to provide any permanence; the corollary of this observation can thus suggest that the masculinized capitalistic collective does not and cannot effectively record or even re-present the experiences of those who exist (or are relegated) to a place outside of the collective's peculiar double-edged safety. The collective has no real power over the events of the novel, despite its hegemonic position as narrator, because the ultimate authorial power is patriarchal capitalism. Just as the public is "diverted from meaningful participation in governance" by corporate capitalist power, as Rosemary Hennessy¹¹ suggests in *Profit and Pleasure*, the world of the ad-agency in the text—despite its collectivity—is very obviously not a "formal democracy," but is instead commanded and shaped by unseen, imperceptible patriarchal capitalism (Hennessy 77).

Remarkable, too, is the further implication of a feminist narratological analysis of the novel because the former rationalization—that *Then We Came to the End's* narrative—we is not anti-masculine, but it is ultimately used by the novel as a *critique of patriarchal masculinization*—could not have been arrived at without the application of a feminist narratology. The text's narrative form is informed by the content and the interpretive interaction of a reader with the text's competing ideologies, as well as a reader's ability to *impart* competing ideologies into her/his reading of a text. Thus, *Then We Came to the End's* narration does not fail feminist (re)interpretations/applications of narratology because, though it is not revolutionary in its narrative structure, the text remains critical of the patriarchal masculinizations that plague it. Structuralist-based models of narratological analysis might have overlooked the importance of ideology and hermeneutic authority endemic to narrative theory. A feminist narratological approach,

however, would not indicate that Genettian schematizations of *Then We Came to the End* do not work, but rather confirms that the imprinted structuralist models are themselves often masculine models based upon (dominantly) masculine, androcentric texts. An ostensibly feminist narrative like *Then We Came to the End*, or at least a narrative that complicates the conventions of patriarchal narrative structure, becomes an outlier, something that is inexpressible in the language of geometrics and structuralist criticism. A feminist-minded narratological approach does, therefore, provide a better understanding of the text, and it allows one to examine how *Then We Came to the End's* narrative technique functions so much more as a *critique* of patriarchal capitalism's subversion of the feminine than as a narrative structure departing wholly from the conventional novel. But even to recognize this essential element in feminist narrative theory is hardly complete because intrinsically a feminist narratology is often *defined by* the ways in which it is different from structuralist narratology and essentialist taxonomies. Likewise, narratology is not grounded in a mere "patriarchal ideology" (Gibson 120); it is the descendent literary criticism of an entrenched, internalized patriarchal culture that has engendered a masculine tradition of literature whose hegemony disallows the very existence of a non-masculine text. Put more concretely, just as we cannot know how a non-patriarchal culture/society would appear, we do not know how a purely feminist (or even a non-patriarchal) narrative would appear either. Conversely, though, there are dangers inherent in the deductions that often accompany feminist narratological work. As Page asserts, "[t]hose working in the wider field of feminist linguistics have cautioned against the assumption that any linguistic form [...] can be correlated with gender in a simplistic fashion" ("Gender" 201). Instead, Page would have a "feminist narratology" that "seeks to come to terms with shifting, variable relations between gender and narrative" ("Gender" 201), which does seem far less assumptive and far more effective in its evaluation of the bulk of the masculine-led narratological work done by narrative theory's androcentric progenitors. But one could argue, too, that it remains important to distinguish feminist narratology's difference from those whose work comes before it. Until patriarchal culture's hegemonic sway over narrative (and, thus, narratology) is relaxed

or rolled back, feminist narratives will always be defined by their difference from the patriarchal precedents established by long-held masculinist traditions, and by patriarchy's subtle subversion of even that which resists the panoptic ideological influences of its masculine, authoritative power.

Notes

1. Todorov's view is, in this way, one of the original universalizing ones—the idea that, as Andrew Gibson states, the “fantasy of a geometrical clarity [...] emerges in narratological descriptions of plot and narrative structure. Even an ostensibly non-geometrical narratological theme [...] can lead to a geometrisation of the text” (Gibson 3). Thus, a form of essentialization takes hold.

2. Gibson's distinction here is important, especially to counter those who might suggest the structuralist hold on narratology has gone the way of structuralism itself, losing ground and acceptance in literary theory. Despite the contention that structuralism has reached its zenith and has now begun a descent back toward the nadir of obscurity, it cannot be forgotten or neglected that “narratology had its roots in structuralism” (Gibson 5), and it is the roots that almost always endure. The stamp of narrative theory's origins is undeniable.

3. This is Genette's coinage (Genette, *Discourse* 176).

4. The contemplation of the collective-we is perhaps most salient in the work of Susan Sniader Lanser, who is often regarded as the premier pioneer in the field of feminist narratology. In her essay “Who *Are* the ‘We’?: The Shifting Terms of Feminist Discourse,” she remains suspect of the collective-we's power, denoting that “it alone dissolves the dichotomy of other and self. It thus represents a vast and variable array of possibilities, for it can erase Otherness without erasing the Other, and designates Other with our without denying the self” (*Discourse* Lanser 18).

5. Hite's important work in the realm of feminist narratology is particularly interested in investigating story's fundamental tie to the personal, as well as to story's sometimes focus and ability to reveal the “other side” (Hite 9).

6. For more on the notion of Genettian perception, see Jahn and his attention to the term *apperception* to “designate both

the interpretive nature of perception and one's understanding something in in 'frames' of previous experience" (101). This is a key term to highlight, particularly in complicating notions of focalization and remembering that "perception and apperception [...] affect *all* participants in the game of storytelling, including readers" (Jahn 102).

7. In *Fictions of Authority*, Lanser defines "discursive authority" as a "conjunction of social and rhetorical properties," and that the "intellectual credibility, ideological validity, and aesthetic value claimed by or conferred upon a work, author, narrator, character, or textual practice—is produced interactively [...]" (*Authority*, Lanser 6). Lanser goes on to note, too, that "discursive authority has [...] attached itself most readily to white, educated men of hegemonic ideology," which implicitly insinuates which group has authority over the reading of those ideologies, as well (*Authority* 6).

8. That is, for Jahn "online perception" is "real-life perception" while "offline perception" is "the imaginary sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches that one perceives in recollection, vision, hallucination, and dream" (99).

9. This is based upon Tom Wait's song "Walking Spanish," wherein "walking Spanish" is taken to mean the long walk toward execution.

10. See Haraway's work for a further investigation of the socialist-feminist consciousness in an emerging postmodern workplace, wherein she metaphorizes the concept of the cyborg, "a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (149).

11. The concept of "neoliberalism" is key to Hennessy, who further posits that "[a]n effective democracy needs people to feel a connection to one another. In fostering consumption, neoliberalism provides the fabric for these connections, but it replaces community for critical citizenship with shopping malls" (77). Examined inversely, one might conceive of how this just as aptly applies to the masculinized collective in *Then We Came to the End*, wherein community is replaced with a false-feminization, a collective that is thoroughly masculinized for the purposes of "fostering" production *for* "consumption" (Hennessy 77).

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