

ENGL 4384: Senior Seminar
Student Anthology

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SACRED SEX:

RELIGION AND EROTICISM IN LITERATURE

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INTRODUCTION

DR. PATRICK M. ERBEN

As our seminar discussed the intersections of spirituality and eroticism in literature, art, and film throughout the semester, heated public debates once again revealed the current political and cultural sensitivities attached to religion and sex: ultra-conservative talk-show host Rush Limbaugh infamously calling women's rights activist and Georgetown law student Sandra Fluke a "s—t," the Catholic bishops of America protesting the Obama administration's decision to require health care plans offered by religious institutions to include birth control, the popularity of TV shows (from *Big Love* to *Sister Wives*) about polygamy, and the debate over same-sex marriage leading to two widely discrepant responses—a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage in North Carolina on the one hand and President Obama's announcement that he personally supports such unions. Although these issues and phenomena were not primarily the center of our investigations, they productively informed the texts we examined, ranging from *The Handmaid's Tale* to metaphysical poetry to *The Crucible* to the *The Last Temptation of Christ*. The transgressive nature of the material forced the participants of the seminar to test their own personally, socially, or culturally constructed boundaries and engage taboo topics such as incest and anal sex. What became the most shocking for everyone was the realization that religious language—expressions of the relationship between humanity and the divine—frequently relied on the language of sexual excess or transgression to fathom the unknowable or ineffable realms of human comprehension or image making. Extreme piety, we found, adopted the language and phenomenology of sexual desire and passion, whereas attempts to exert social and political authority—especially over women—configured dually repressive regimes of sexual and religious control.

In working independently on their anthology essays, students realized the many ways in which contemporary popular culture operates on the axis between religion/spirituality and sexuality, often producing both shocking and intellectually challenging constellations. Our excursus through English and American literary history debunked the idea that the occupation with sex and sexuality was only a recent phenomenon and an effect of the loosening or loss of religious controls. Rather, they found that the vernaculars of their own time—from TV shows to film to internet fanfiction—probe similar terrain as ancient texts concerned with sin, sex, and salvation. This was the most exciting point of the seminar: when students took up the questions and paradigms of the course and applied them independently and intelligently to current (or past) cultural productions, harnessing their dual literacies in popular culture and literary history, conventions, and theory.

Several students thus explore in their essays how current tropes and media discuss and reevaluate long-standing paradigms and questions: **Jenna Harvie** examines how the fandom surrounding the TV show *Supernatural* harnesses the internet platform to expand the series' subtle innuendoes about the central characters—the Winchester brothers—and their possibly homoerotic, incestuous relationship, all the while precluding the political advancement of progressive sexual choices, such as gay marriage. Similarly, **Kim Gonter** analyzes the apparent transgressiveness of contemporary succubus fiction to reveal rather traditionally valued concepts about relationships, love, and sexuality. **Greg Lewis**'s reading of the 2006 film *Black Snake Moan* intriguingly suggests that its shocking depictions of excess and abjection make visible the ways in which religious fanaticism and the sexual exploitation of women are intertwined. **Crystal Laminack** finds that *Star Trek*'s Spok character and his struggle between reason and sexual passion reflect the continuing human endeavor to reconcile both. **Rachel Bartlett**'s comparison of the HBO series *Boardwalk Empire* and the novel *The Handmaid's Tale* similarly demonstrates that the central male characters' (Nelson van Alden and "The Commander")

religious zealotry masks and leads to the very sexual deviance or “sin” they seek to eradicate.

A number of students engaged texts that link historical, ancient, and Biblical tropes of sexuality and religion to current cultural phenomena, politics, and media. **Anastasia Latson** compares the ways in which various concepts of “sacred sex”—from the Moravian Church to the fictional Republic of Gilead in *The Handmaid’s Tale*—are informed by widely differing interpretations of Scriptures, from the book of Genesis to the Song of Songs. **Amanda Shoemake** compares colonial representations of Native Americans’ nakedness and sexuality as justifications for imperial othering with current Native American erotica written primarily by and for white women. **Tara Prouty** follows representations of the werewolf from ancient lore to Angela Carter’s stories, reading the mythical figure as an articulation of the fear and demonization of male sexual appetite. **Raven Eggleston** uses Dan Brown’s widely popular novel *The Da Vinci Code* and the film based on the book as a lens to examine the suppression of the ancient concept of divine sex—hierogamy—by the Catholic Church. Similarly, **Ashley Westmoreland** adopts the lens of Christopher Rice’s novel *The Snow Garden* to demonstrate how ahistorical or anachronistic deployments of historical texts or images—such as Hieronymus Bosch’s painting *The Garden of Earthly Delights*—can distort their political, cultural, and religious context and thus sanction manipulations of uncritical consumers of knowledge and art today. **Catherine Evans** traces the oppression of female voices and sexuality by religious authority from the Puritans’ trial against and banishment of Anne Hutchinson to the virtual discarding of so-called un-women and Jezebels in Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*.

Two students focus on more narrowly defined literary topics, but each revises more commonly applied critical approaches by inspecting the connective operations of religion and sexuality. **Amie Hendrix** argues that previous readings of Christina Rossetti’s *Goblin Market* have established analogies between the characters and Biblical figures—specifically Eve and Christ—without taking

this parallel to its logical conclusion: that the sisters' homoerotic longings and encounters ultimately feature as redemptive agents, whereas the goblins' corrupted heterosexual acts figure as rape. **Kimberly Smith** shows Walt Whitman's and Emily Dickinson's poetics as analogous conduits for probing—inwardly and self-reflexively—the link between divinity and human sexuality; their poetry is most provocative when the language of the divine and the sexual become intertwined or indistinguishable.

In carefully employing cultural and literary criticism, the essays in this collection bespeak the crucial contribution that rigorous training in the humanities can make to our society and culture. Our students prove their intellectual, emotional, critical, and rhetorical maturity by defying the hype, the clichés, and the dogmas surrounding sex and religion present in public discourse. The results declare that “yes, we can actually talk about this.” The essays neither preach nor do they dismiss religious sensibilities; they do not gratuitously revel in sexual imagery and language but discern the complicated social, historical, and literary interactions of sex and religion. In sum, they confirm that sex *is* “sacred”—mysterious, mystical, taboo, spiritual, ecstatic, disruptive, and, sometimes, unifying.

I.

SEX AND
RELIGION
IN CONTEMPORARY
POPULAR CULTURE

**“THEY DO KNOW WE’RE BROTHERS, RIGHT?”:
FINDING SEXUAL TRADITIONALISM
IN HOMOEROTIC, INCESTUOUS
SUPERNATURAL FANFICTION**

JENNA HARVIE

Lady Gaga, *Teen Mom*, New York same-sex marriage, election of a black president. Upon first glance America accepts an array of different personalities, different views on life; we seem progressive. However, other practices undercut the progressive streak: the debate over Don't Ask Don't Tell, the conversation regarding female birth control, and the Don't Say Gay bill contradict the movement toward equality and understanding. A strong resistance to homosexuality—and, more broadly, any sexual practices deemed transgressive by conservative society—still exists. Hollywood, however, takes active steps to insert such transgression into television and film. The plot of *Will & Grace* often focuses on the homosexuality of Will and Jack, while *Sex and the City* stages Samantha in a short lesbian relationship. Likewise, patients in two episodes of *House* practice incest, as does the main antagonist in season three of *Nip/Tuck*. In each of these cases, the writers and producers push the boundaries our culture has set up by twining deviant sexual behavior into their shows and characters. Hollywood stages these relationships, chooses the on-screen romances, and decides to play with the boundaries, potentially for the sake of their ratings. Though any of these would be worthy of study, the CW's *Supernatural* enters into this arena as well, with a slightly different, more nuanced approach: Wincest.

The road trip-style show revolves around Dean and Sam Winchester, two brothers privy to the supernatural elements of the world, who were raised by their father to hunt down urban legends, the monsters in the closet, even angels from time to time. While the show does include some mild, joking references to homosex-

uality—"So, a king sized bed?" a hotel receptionist asks in "Play-things"—the writers immediately mark the boys as heterosexual by staging one-night stands for Dean and a long-term relationship for Sam. Despite this, a corner of *Supernatural* fandom (a subculture comprised of fans of a particular book series, movie, television show, etc.) breaks away from the canon. Though the show casts the boys as heterosexual, in Wincest fanfiction, "Dean is aware of every piece of Sam. Sam's hair brushes his face, his scent fills his nostrils, he's under his hands [when Dean,] surging forward, brings their mouths together" (Nynxlynx). "Wincest" derives from a combination of "Winchester" and "incest" and it is the belief in a homoerotic, incestuous relationship between the brothers. Fans of Wincest create fanfiction, fanvids, and images that set the boys together romantically and erotically. This alteration to the plot deserves deeper consideration. Unlike the shows previously listed, the viewers of *Supernatural*, not the Hollywood players, graft deviant sexual practices onto the plot and characters. And this is an important differentiation; Hollywood (here, standing in for the writers, producers, creators, actors, etc.) nudges societal boundaries for a multitude of reasons, including but not limited to: generation of interest, ratings, and an attempt to say "something" about the culture its television show or movie reflects. The viewers' insertion of the deviance, however, strips away the moneymaking schemes and leaves behind a reflection of the society that created their fantasy in the first place. A variety of readings arise from the cultural phenomenon created by the juxtaposition of taboo subject matter within a reasonably conservative society. A wade-in argument casts Wincest as a call for a more widespread movement toward sexual equality. However, the homoerotic, incestuous relationship may also be indicative of a desire for connection in a culture of social media, or a vehicle to safely experiment without the fear of social repercussion. Wincest illustrates the cultural climate of sexual fear, eventually supporting the supernatural quest of the series and challenging American's image as a progressive, accepting nation.

An initial reading of Wincest casts the phenomenon in an expected light: the obsession with the disapproved subject of

homoerotic incest supports sexual equality by recognizing taboo sexual practices as a fear and then calling for social movement to obliterate that fear. The series resides within a highly science fiction, fantasy realm, where silver bullets kill werewolves and Bloody Mary goes after the guilty. The writers offer these monsters as fact, constructing the series around our "real" world in order to suggest that these same evils exist out of our sight. The average viewer, though likely familiar with the lore the Winchesters hunt, cannot relate to hopping into a '67 Chevy Impala, fake FBI badge in hand, to drive across the country in search of a Wendigo or Hookman. Each time, the viewers have to watch the boys dive into the next battle, hoping they come out alive and together. *Wincest* presents an obstacle understood by the culture that absorbs this television show: sexuality. Again, we are surrounded by the fear of homosexuality and transgressive sexual behavior. We debate about it on websites and warn against fantasized images of it through reality television. It makes sense, then, that this fear Americans have of sexual deviance becomes the boundary line affixed onto the series in their own fictional accounts of the show. Though the fans cannot take up the demon-killing knife to aid their favorite characters in the fight against the apocalypse, they can shift the danger away from the impossible to the somewhat more defeatable. By making prejudice of their sexual orientation the main dilemma the boys face, the fight becomes suddenly mediated and much more conquerable, because each year more states allow marriage equality and laws promote acceptance.

On the one hand, it signifies the obsessive quality associated with fandom: these writers push for realism in order to make Sam and Dean more "real," more easily translated into the same world in which the fanfiction writer lives, and hope to see them come through unscathed for assurance that the fans, too, can overcome their ostracized reputation. On the other, however, *Wincest* translates the brother's demonic problems into "real world" problems in order to call for social movement on sexual equality. A fight is going on against homophobia and inequality, but the signs of it read as somewhat superficial: NOH8 shirts worn on college campuses,

equality bumper stickers, articles about Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie refusing to get married until everyone has the right. These brief nods toward the larger, more political fight seems relevant to *Supernatural* as well. While Sam and Dean bloody themselves and their companions in the fight to save other people, the victims return to the relative normalcy of their lives after the angry spirit has been salted and burned or the demon exorcised. Wincest suggest that the responsibility does not only fall upon the annotated few, but rather on the masses. Wincest acknowledges that homophobia (and, more broadly speaking, discomfort with any nontraditional sexual practices) exists by making it the “problem” the brothers have to overcome, then draws the parallel to social movement.

Alternately, Wincest could offer the audience a happy ending for the characters they care for in order to acknowledge a broader societal problem of disconnect due to social media. A complained-about legacy of *Supernatural* for the viewers resides in the high death rate among loved characters. Though Sam and Dean continually skirt or return from death, they also watch their mother, father, father figure Bobby, fellow Hunters, and innocent bystanders die on a regular basis. Just as it takes a toll on the brothers, it does for the fans, too. Often, just as a character wins the loyalty of the fan base, the writers sacrifice him or her to the overarching storyline of the season. Most notably, the love interests for both brothers rarely last long: a demon kills Sam’s long-term girlfriend in season one, and in season two Sam shoots his short-term love interest, Madison. Likewise, Dean forfeits a relationship with Cassie in order to remain a Hunter, and an angel erases Lisa’s memory to protect her from Dean’s lifestyle. Wincest offers a reprieve for the fans from the onslaught of dead love interests and lost family and friends.

In fact, the thread throughout the series that allows some fans to latch onto the concept of the homoerotic in the show relies on the codependent relationship the boys have to one another. The series comments on it frequently: “I think we’re weaker [together] because whatever we have between us—love, family, whatever it is—[the demons] are always going to use it against us,” Dean says

in "The End." The boys verbalize this aspect of their relationship frequently and Wincest fanfiction heavily depends on it. In this reading, Wincest takes into account the boy's inability to form functional, lasting relationships and filters it through the strong connection they have to one another. Writer Darren Elliot-Smith describes this slash-fiction phenomenon as "catharsis" for the fans, suggesting that "true catharsis is achieved in these unbridled erotic fictions that allow Sam and Dean to find fleeting moments of happiness with one another" (108). Catharsis is an adequate term. After each death, the fans' only method of recuperation from their mourning arrives through the brothers—they become invested in the emotional states of Sam and Dean, as well as the brothers' reliance on one another. The fans search for "end game" happiness (meaning a relationship that lasts through to the end of the perceived story) for Sam and Dean becomes a call for similar acceptance for themselves and their fandom. In direct response to the deaths the writers so often stage, the audience takes control of the plot and characters and spins stories in which Sam and Dean find a lasting romance within each other.

Irony, of course, resides in the suggestion that fans desire community: fandom exists through social media, through YouTube, fanfiction websites, and message boards. Stephen Marchie describes the virtual state in which America currently lives in "Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?": "In the face of social disintegration, we have essentially hired an army of replacement confidants, an entire class of professional carers. Loneliness is at the American core, a by-product of a long-standing national appetite for independence." Perhaps the fans' confirmed immersion brings credibility to the claim that Wincest references the cultural climate of isolation in the wake of omniscient, ever-present social media. The fans' desire for an emotional connection between the boys—in this case, made stronger by a sexual relationship—comes in the wake of wide-scale social loneliness. Sex works into that equation in two ways: on the one hand, it is a physical representation of the emotional companionship the article claims America thirsts for right now. An emotional relationship between the brothers

already thrives in Supernatural, though. Rather, Wincest fanfiction emphasizes the blatant, hungry *need*. The reader immediately catches the urgency of the sexual encounter in “I Carry the Suitcase of My Grief In Both Hands, Ma”: Sam finds that he can barely believe he and Dean are together, that “the evidence of his own hands, his own mouth, almost isn’t enough for him to believe” and he “tastes [Dean’s] skin, smells his scent, but needs more.” This is just one example; in others, “Dean realizes if he wants [sex], he’s going to have to take it,” while in another “he seemed to sense Sam’s sudden frantic urgency [when he] touched Dean everywhere he could reach, running his fingers over the exposed skin” (Nynxlynx, Withdiamonds). The inherent urgency instilled in sex mimics the desire for physical contact and lasting commitment, not single-click communication via the “like” button on Facebook or the “thumbs up” on YouTube. Sam and Dean’s required independence due to their unorthodox career as demon hunters pushes the fan’s to create Wincest fanfiction, hungry not for sexual deviance, but promised companionship.

We could also read Wincest as an extension of the fandom itself, a method by which the fans broadcast their individuality. Much like the evil they fight, Sam and Dean exist on the outskirts of society. They stay in small, questionable motel rooms, often booking those rooms with one of the many fake identification cards they carry. Dean picks up girls by lying about his profession, claiming everything from Hollywood agent to reporter, and they frequently make money by hustling people at pool. Fandom exists on the same outer edge of the general community. A basement interest, often frowned up, fans fully immersed in fandom may partake in anything from conventions, lined up in costume for hours to ask their favorite actors or actresses probing questions, to “LARPing” (live action role-playing, which requires the fan to adopt the costume and mannerisms of a character and play out alternate universe scenarios with fellow fans). Such activities cast them away from general society and into what Ken Gelder deems a “subculture.” Gelder describes the mainstream image of fandom: “fans are routinely cast as excessive, over-enthusiastic consumers,

too heavily identified with and invested in the media texts they build their fandom around" (143). Despite having such a degrading opinion cast upon them, fans rarely hide the passion they feel for their fandom. Fans of *Supernatural* proudly wear t-shirts with the famous Sam quote "I lost my shoe," recite memorized exorcisms, and flaunt their anti-possession tattoos.

Wincest acts within that same sphere of the irregular, the ostracized, in such a way that it highlights the "othering" that continues to occur in our supposedly tolerant era. Much like fandom itself, Wincest fandom sits as a corner to the general fandom, tolerated but not wholly accepted by the majority of *Supernatural* fans. Wincest represents the identity of subcultures by mirroring the taboo status of the subject matter, remaining on the outskirts of fandom. The taboo nature of supporting a homoerotic relationship between two brothers pushes against normative society. Wincest fanfiction frequently alludes to the way such a relationship between the brothers steps away from standard, accepted practice. In a fanfiction piece titled "He is My Sin," Deans asks Sam, "It feels good, right?" Sam's reply ("but it's *wrong*, Dean") nods to what the writers of slash fanfiction already understand: that their subject matter, and their character pairing, chaffs with the accepted confines of society (Dravvin Rayne). When the writer of this fanfiction imbues Sam's response with conflict—simultaneous acknowledgment that he likes the feeling his brother gives him and that that there is something "off" about it—she also comments on her own dilemma, then. Like the fans who support it, Wincest makes people uncomfortable; it makes others fidget due to the "weirdness" of the practice. In this way, Wincest epitomizes what fans themselves experience in interaction with regular society. Both are "wrong," taboo in some way, points of discomfort.

Deeper than that, Wincest acknowledges the fear of sexual deviation and offers a safe outlet for experimentation. That "fear" becomes evident when considering the number of explanations for "gayness" or "straightness" rising up in the last few decades: homosexuality as a choice, homosexuality as a component of our DNA, homosexuality as a result of one's upbringing and home-

life. These conflicting notions of sexual orientation develop from one concrete fact: that we have no facts, no “truths,” no undeniable tests to seek out the causes of sexual preference. Scientists, psychiatrists, and religionist will all offer differing opinions, but without supportable evidence, the truth is that we simply cannot know; even if DNA is the determining factor, this does not resolve the necessity to wonder, “Well, am I?” Rather, it necessitates figuring oneself out. Given this climate, Wincest steps in as a medium of expression. Because of the absence of a test for gay-positive or gay-negative, fanfiction offers a vehicle by which its writers experiment with transgressive sexuality without the necessity to make a full, deviant leap in their real lives. Sam and Dean—fictional characters, ones whom the writers would feel comfortable with as the result of their fandom—act out the behavior the writers and readers fear practicing themselves. In fact, Harvard psychologist E. L. Pattullo blames this fear for general homophobia: “Some straights are quite conscious of having homosexual proclivities and are fearful of undermining their predominant heterosexuality” (Becker 49). In this reading, then, Wincest’s progressive, superficial image, as that of a section of our society willing to accept non-traditional forms of sexuality, instead registers as another indication of sexual discomfort. Hidden behind a username and the protective title “fandom,” Wincest writers perform their deviation through fanfiction and vicariously explore homosexuality without the anxiety of outing themselves. Granted, the rest of the population not involved in *Supernatural* or fandom ask themselves these same questions and find their own methods for investigating their sexuality, so why does it develop into transgressive fanfiction for this particular fandom? Perhaps the series, in a way, calls for it.

Sam and Dean search for the things that go bump in the night—but, more often than not, those “things” result from supernatural entities or religious myth, and Wincest fanfiction mirrors that search for the supernatural in such a way that enhances the religious quest by breaking down physical barriers while illustrating a continued fear of transgression. In the pilot episode, Sam says, “When I told dad I was afraid of the thing in my closet, he gave

me a .45!" The show centers around that concept—"the thing in the closet"—sometimes literally, but mostly figuratively: the peripheral evil, the people who go missing under bizarre circumstances, the faint whisper barely heard. The brothers track down, research, and ultimately hunt these unknown entities. It is a literal quest for evil, sometimes in the form of ghosts but often in form of biblical demons and, later in the series, angels. In fact, in most episodes, Sam and Dean do not know what supernatural bad type they search for; the first half of an episode typically stages the boys compiling facts in an attempt to narrow down the possible myth or entity causing trouble. Wincest fanfiction mirrors the show's supernatural quest. In Withdiamond's fanfiction, Sam claims that being close to Dean again feels "something like discovery," only to express concern when he realizes "Dean was a revelation, and he shouldn't be. He should be familiar." Their sexual relationship assumes the qualities of the unknown. The notion of a sexual relationship, in particular one deemed "wrong" by general society, as a quest for the unknown makes a kind of sense. As the boys search for answers to the supernatural, they simultaneously delve into the unknown of the corporeal, of the human.

The fans draw the inherent physicality in the fanfiction from two sources: from the show itself and from a broader theoretical concept of reaching God through sex. The potent emotional relationship between Sam and Dean in the episodes occasionally translates into aggressive embraces after one or the other narrowly escapes death. More than that, though, the show emphasizes the physical. Each week, viewers watch the brothers flung across rooms, knocked unconscious, or bleeding from a wound. Dean has an overt oral fixation, constantly ingesting food, while Sam goes through a blood-consumption phase. Even, in a way, scenes of penetration: stabbing, gunshot wounds, stakes, each time the death requires an object forcefully inserted into the opposing party. And finally, possession, in which a demon or angel forces themselves into the body of their victim. In fact, the major story arc for season five involved Sam and Dean fighting against their destinies to become the host bodies ("meat suits," as the angels say,

again emphasizing the physical) for Lucifer and Michael, respectively, for the impending apocalypse. If we look at the possession as metaphorical penetration, the series alludes momentarily to sex as a stepping-stone to God, or at least to enlightenment. There is a history there: the images of Christ as bridegroom, as mother, as penetrated while on the cross, the sexualization of Solomon's song, even the poetry of later centuries that calls on biblical references, all jumpstart association of God and sex. Rambuss encapsulates the wide-spread nature of sex and religion best: "Enjoying God as one's lover [...] is commonplace—a point that has been dually remarked in any number of accounts of seventeenth-century religious literature, accounts that typically had little more to say about this permeative suffusion of erotic imagery and energy in the devotional expression of the period behind remarking its utter conventionality" (74). Essentially, not only is the understanding of sex as a means to reach God commonplace, but the documentation of it is as well. The breakdown of physical boundaries seen in *Wincest* fanfiction, the writers' decision to pair the boys together erotically and romantically, follows a path of sex as the vehicle to holiness and enlightenment set down, at the very least, since the Bible. In this way, the sexuality of *Wincest* fanfiction—and, truthfully, the work often reads more like erotica than fiction—enhances the overt spiritual and supernatural arc of the storyline. The fans place emphasis on the physical in order to push the plot where mainstream television will not allow it to go. They understand the necessity for a deep, physical understanding of the body to transgress Earthly boundaries and find full enlightenment of the supernatural world the boys inhabit.

Wincest demands interest, though, because of the taboo status homoeroticism and incest have in American culture. Therefore, even if *Wincest* mirrors the supernatural quest the boys participate in, the decision to materialize that metaphor in the form of a transgressive sexual relationship would still puzzle the average consumer. However, the trope of sex as an enhancement to the supernatural has existed in literature for centuries. In Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, or Lewis's *The Monk*, for example, the super-

natural tones in the novels add a sense of corruption to the young girls' sexual encounters. In both of these novels, the mere thought of a sexual relationship rings with transgression: the women are young and either already nuns or seeking to become nuns. Sex, then, functions as a danger just as potent as a supernatural castle that materializes giant, falling helmets. However, in our modern society, sex alone never signifies danger. In fact, sex is a key element of the boy's characterization. To demonstrate their macho personalities (on the show, not necessarily in the fanfiction), the writers frequently write the brothers into one night stands or brief, flirtatious encounters with women. Even the casting illustrates the intentional sexualization of the series: Jensen Ackles and Jared Padalecki typically stand out in comparison to the other Hunters on the show, who wear worn, stained clothing, faded baseball caps, or a mullet. Compared to that, the boyish good looks of Sam and the rugged, handsome features of Dean, in addition to frequent scenes of them shirtless, cast the boys as highly sexualized. Given the common nature of sex on television in the 2000s, simply showing Dean without a shirt on does not signal "transgression" or "danger." Wincest, then, is an indication of the highly sexualized culture we live in. In order to suggest transgression, fandom has to step past sex into the taboo, and in this case, into homosexuality. The incest and homoeroticism uphold the quest for the supernatural because of desensitization to general sexual practices. On the one hand, it illustrates acceptance of sex, but on the other, it denotes a continued discomfort and fear of "abnormal" sex.

To recognize homoerotic, incestuous fanfiction produced in high numbers solely as indicative of social acceptance of nontraditional sexual practices is to lose the nuance of the cultural phenomenon. When a fan writes an R-rated story about the erotic encounters between Sam and Dean, they do not simultaneously affect the climate of homophobia; their fanfiction does not negate or even argue against Prop 8 or Don't Ask Don't Tell. Rather, we read it as a product of the times, as a signifier of these laws and viewpoints on nontraditional sexuality (one might argue that even

my use of “nontraditional” points to a fear of sexual freedom). Whether *Wincest* dialogues with a desire to obtain equality, as an indication that America has become too closed-off and secluded behind their monitors, or as a vehicle by which the writers can experiment, it still points to a discomfort with sexuality: each of these rings with encloement, fear, continued oppression. In the end, the homoeroticism enhances the supernatural quest in which Sam and Dean take part. It dialogues with the long-standing tradition of reaching God through sexual encounters. For all of the progressiveness projected on television and film screens, a thread of conservatism runs through American culture, blurred by our high tolerance for “acceptable” sexuality, by the images of bikini-clad women and shirtless men. *Wincest* brings that fear center-stage, able to sneak in due to its placement as a subculture of a subculture, the lowest of the low, ostracized enough to prevent corruption of the mainstream.

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**GET A DEMON OFF:
SEXUALITY AND THE SUCCUBUS IN
RICHELLE MEAD'S *SUCCUBUS* SERIES AND
JIM BUTCHER'S *DRESDEN FILES* SERIES**

KIM GONTER

Ideas as cautionary tales offer characters and figures who best express the traits that are undesirable, and these figures become the ultimate embodiment of the thing a give society decrees to be abnormal. Nearly every culture has developed some way to express vigilance at the idea of rampant sexual indulgence overtaking a person. The succubus, “a demon in female form supposed to have carnal intercourse with men in their sleep” (*OED Online*), is the personification of restrained sexual appetites and the dangers associated with indulging those appetites. As a manifestation of improper desire, the succubus’s earliest form was that of a pure demon burning with the need to seduce victims for survival. More recently, the exploration of traditional demons and other such supernatural creatures has taken the approach of adding a human dimension to the demonic. No longer are the traditional dangers mindless creatures seeking to sate their desires and basic needs; modern horrors retain and show a portion of humanity in their thoughts and actions. Authors Richelle Mead and Jim Butcher present supernatural sexual predators who attempt to deal with the limitations their unholy circumstances have forced upon them in relation to their ambitions to maintain a normal, human existence. This humanizing of the monstrous parallels humanity’s increased understanding of the complexity of the human experience; people are rarely purely good or evil, and they have numerous motives for their actions. The modern Western approach to demons is more secular than in the past, since modern science has largely ruled out the physical presence of demons, preferring to relegate them to impairments of the mind and per-

ception rather than the real danger they presented to society in the past, especially since there is no need to fear what resides only in the mind, after all. Contemporary willingness to explore and address areas formerly reserved as dangerous, damning topics indicates an enriching understanding of the world as a more complex environment.

The succubus appears in most world cultures, though the precise characteristics it embodies differ from one to another, as do the methods employed to entrap a victim according to the kind of sexual conduct that is deemed inappropriate or unexplainable in a given society. While the succubus is traditionally credited with a female form, some legends state that the demon could actually shape-shift between male and female forms to attack victims of both genders. As a separate entity, the male incubus counterpart to the succubus did not develop the distinction of “a demon [...] supposed [...] to seek carnal intercourse with women” until the church officially recognized them in the Middle Ages (*OED Online*); referring to a gender-swapping demon with any degree of precision is confusing, so providing another descriptor makes sense so victims may place the blame precisely where it belongs and on the correct gender of demon. Western civilization typically credits the first woman, Lilith, as the mother of all succubae based upon the Hebrew tradition. In this tradition Adam has a wife before Eve, a wife created in the same way and at the same time as Adam; this wife’s name is Lilith. Lilith, though, is not an especially obedient wife, refusing to agree Adam taking the sexually dominant position above her during intercourse, and Adam, of course, refuses to even consider allowing her to have her way, preferring that he take the dominant position (Witcombe). Obviously, if Lilith will not give in on this matter, the chances are not good that she will be any more amenable on others. To resolve the conflict, Adam and God decide that a different wife is needed to satisfy Adam’s need for a companion. Woman 2.0, named Eve, is created and becomes the mother of humanity, while Lilith is damned to start the line of succubae, the “Daughter[s] of Lilith” out to tempt men with sex to feed their unnatural appetites

(Mead, *Succubus Heat* 80). Because Lilith's creation is the equal to Adam's, she does not need to submit to his will, leading to the conflict between them, a flaw that is addressed when Eve's creation starts with Adam's rib. Such a personal connection to man creates in woman obedience to man's will; Lilith was sexually liberated in comparison to Eve, so she was unfit as a wife. Her punishment is the unending need to sate herself and her sexual feelings, though she must be circumspect in her approach.

Throughout history the succubus, whether in male or female form, does not seek her victims in the open; instead, she comes in the night, invading dreams while her prey sleeps so that she can slip past his defenses and wreak havoc. This type of demon developed as a means to explain events with a clear sexual component that society's cultural mores do not cover, i.e., male nocturnal arousal in particular, unexplained pregnancies, etc. Such oddities clearly had to have a supernatural component as good people always act appropriately within society's bounds, including regulating what appears in their dreams. As "potentially pleasurable erotic dreams were fused with a [...] preexisting conception of the asphyxiating nightmare" during the early Christian era, the idea of a person having any feel-good dreams became one of fear and a sign of a lack of positive spiritual progress (Stewart 281). An erotic dreamer is not devoting enough effort to cleansing the self of foul influences; otherwise his or her dreams would be fully relatable to any audience. The consequence of not maintaining a state of reasonable purity is a fear-filled experience with a demon out to take advantage and cause further corruption. Given the reality of physical demons at this time, the thought of sleeping with even the least impure thoughts would be terrifying, which would feed into creating nightmares in the first place. Whether male or female, the succubus shape-shifts into the correct form for the victim, which allows for the gathering of sperm from a male victim and impregnation of a female victim with the compromised genetic material of the male victim. This demonic procreation process is a way to spread the evil of the succubus to many victims, including a future child who can have the stigma of being a demon's child.

The gender-swapping is a way to explain how a woman could become pregnant when the alleged father is not supposed to have sexual contact with her, regardless of the reasons, and accusing someone of adultery, rape, or other sexual misconduct is not the way to hold a community together.

In contrast to the Western approach to the succubus, one Chinese version of such a creature suggests that the succubus comes about when a shape-shifting animal seeking power goes about the search in an inappropriate manner. Often, these delinquents seek “the erotic theft of human essence [because it] is easier and much more rapid” than the legal manner of increasing one’s power (Jameson 275). In both Western and Chinese traditions, the succubus is created when an individual takes action or seeks position or power that is not necessarily his or hers to seek; the succubus becomes a predator of humans because of a decision to bend or ignore the rules governing accepted actions. When sexual energy is shared, according to Jameson, an equal exchange of power occurs, and there is no negative impact on the practitioner. Only using “the technique of stealing essence for the purpose of acquiring power” is a truly punishable offense (278). Sex then becomes a form of nourishment for a sexual parasite rather than the intimate experience it is meant to be for humans. While there may be intimacy between the succubus and the victim, that intimacy is forced upon the victim at the command of the succubus as a mechanism to facilitate draining whatever sort of energy the predator requires from the victim.

Contemporary author Richelle Mead has created a relatable succubus character in Georgina Kincaid, the narrator of her *Succubus* series of books. Georgina is a succubus in contracted service to Hell, a position she has held for about 1500 years. The entire purpose of Georgina’s service is to corrupt as many souls as possible so that they go to Hell when the individual dies; the competition for souls is one between Heaven and Hell, the winner of which will somehow be determined at some point in the future based upon the number of souls each side controls. For Georgina, however, existence has become rather bleak as she finds herself barred from having a real relationship with a man because “he [risks] his life by being physi-

cal with [her]” (Mead, *Succubus Revealed* 23). Soul-stealing sex no longer appeals to Georgina because of the dangers to her partner, so her increasing ennui means she seeks out only those men whose souls are already corrupted and dammed to Hell, despite the fact that a more pure soul would give her succubus powers a greater energy boost than a tainted soul. She would prefer to have as little effect as possible, though this resolve forces her to sleep with more men more often to feed “the perpetual craving” for soul energy her succubus side creates (Mead, *Succubus Heat* 127). Georgina knows she is a succubus, but she has almost partitioned that aspect of her identity into something that she *does* as opposed to something that she *is*. While the craving is always present to one degree or another, Georgina chooses how she will feed it and how it will affect her as carefully as she can because she still has the option to choose for herself; that was not taken away in her deal with Hell.

In contrast to the choice of becoming a succubus, Jim Butcher introduces a unique brand of vampire: the White Court Vampire. One of the first traditional monsters to receive a humanity makeover, the possibilities inherent in the vampire’s sex appeal, which stems from the seduction of the victim to permit feeding, make for a natural avenue to explore a human trapped in a monster’s body. This type of vampire, one of the White Court, does not need blood for nourishment; instead they use and magnify potentially self-destructive emotions such as lust, fear, and despair as a means to psychically ensnare their victims and to gain sustenance. The intertwining of the predator and prey’s energies allows the vampire access to feed off the psychic energies rather than any sort of physical force. Because of the mental entrapment, as well as what Butcher describes as the “psychic whammy” and the “come-hither” appeal (*Blood Rites*), the White Court is considered the most dangerous of the Vampire Courts, and it is this psychic component that has lent the usage of the terms succubae and incubi to further highlight the seductive danger these vampires represent. They are not just after blood, they are after the very essence of a person, and if they must completely enslave a victim to their demonic wills, the White Court will not hesitate

to do so. Thomas Raith, a member of the White Court, describes just why sex and lust are so powerful a means of feeding for his kind: “Sex is more than just sensation. It’s a union of the energy of two lives. And it’s explosive. It’s the process for creating *life*. For creating a new *soul*. Think about that. Power doesn’t *get* more dangerous and volatile than that” (*Blood Rites* 160). Sex is a fully intimate act between humans, one in which trust should be created and shared between partners, and it is the perversion of this trust that allows the White Court vampire to get his hooks into a victim; an artificial trust connection is forged when the vampire pulls up lust in the victim, leaving little resistance to the psychic assault that follows. When feeding, the victim first feels “cold [start] spreading through [the body]—delicious, sweet cold that [steals] warmth and strength even as the pleasure [begins]” (*Blood Rites* 160). To distract the victim from the destructive nature of the feeding, pleasure is forced through the connection even as the feelings of wrongness increase the longer the feeding lasts, stealing energy and ultimately addicting the victim to the process. There is one true defense against these predators: true depth of feeling and emotion shared between two people and expressed through the physical sexual act.

True Love, essentially, is harmful and potentially deadly to the White Court. “Even the trappings of love can be dangerous” to them (*Blood Rites* 160); the wrong wedding ring can burn the skin, a prick from the thorn of a rose can poison, and touching the skin of a protected person is painful. As an extension of this protection, the demon within the vampire finds it difficult to mentally entrap and ultimately feed from a protected person. Love is an expression of commitment between two people, which means that they share something they desire to remain unbroken, something that is only faithfully engendered in cooperation with the partner. The physical joining of lovers is “an entwining of bodies caused by an exceptionally intense longing for closeness, [...] offering an ideal expression of passions, longings, conflicts and negotiations” as two separate individuals come together (Gostecnik 582). Expressing the connection two lovers share physically allows the joining of

their energies to create a protection and sense of exclusivity most monogamous relationships work to foster; the physical union is a signal that the pair is together in a real sense and will work to protect the bond they share.

To make sure his children know the dangers of love, Thomas's "father makes [them] all memorize" a passage from the Bible (Butcher, *Blood Rites* 161). He paraphrases First Corinthians, chapter thirteen: "Love is patient, love is kind [...] It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails [...] and when silence lies once more on the face of the deep, three things will endure: faith, hope and love [...] But the greatest of these is love" (Butcher, *Blood Rites* 161). Love is so powerful in the world that it can survive when everything else has turned to dust and vanished; its legacy is eternal endurance even when everything else is lost. The purpose of memorizing this passage is akin to "when parents put those yucky-face stickers on the poisonous cleaning products under the sink" (Butcher, *Blood Rites* 161). Love can kill a White Court vampire, so it is something to be avoided at all costs. Because it can endure, then, it must be a deep emotion that a person will fight to hold on to, an emotion to remind why a person makes certain choices as opposed to simply going along with the flow of things when that path might be easier; the White Court, naturally, wants the easier path to be chosen, and they work to make that path more appealing.

As a means to subvert character-building experiences and as an extension of its influence on the human world, the White Court runs an exclusive underground club in Chicago known simply as Club Zero. It is a place where people can "[do] things that would have gotten them arrested anywhere else" (Butcher, *Turn Coat* 65). Drugs, liquor, bass-thumping music, and sexual acts of all types and inclinations occur in Club Zero, a space specially designed to make one feel safe and anonymous while allowing the discarding of all inhibitions. Even the name gives a clue to its purpose, as Club Zero is perfectly suited as a place of "[z]ero limits [...] inhibitions [...] and] restraint," forming an atmosphere inside the club "of perfect, focused abandon, of indulgence, and it [is]

intriguing and hideous, nauseating and viscerally *hungry*" (*Turn Coat* 65). This club is a manifestation of what the demon within the White Court vampire engenders in its host: a twisted Hunger constantly demanding to be fed but never sated for long. Club Zero is a microcosm what the White Court would ultimately make of the world should they have the chance. An entire planet empty of fulfillment and anything meaningful, where every desire and inclination is indulged without true return, would be a bounty of self-indulgence ripe for the taking. A society that takes everything at the superficial level is no threat; indeed it is enticing, because the achievement of wants and needs without a waiting period does not allow for the creation and sustenance of the deep and true emotions needed to offer protection against those individuals who would be predators amongst the party-goers. Nor would such superficiality grant meaning to life; it would be one party after another without the comparative experiences to give the wild experiences a reference. Relaxation and a good time with others is a good stress reliever, but making such activities the focus of life only serves to obscure genuine experiences behind frivolity. Such a place is ultimately an open buffet for the sexual predator, since the people there do not have a firm foundation to see that they have merely become prey to a predator that has used their own weaknesses against them and ultimately providing the opportunity to lure more victims to the addictive embrace of the White Court.

Modern depictions of the succubus are of highly sexualized, scantily-clad young females, typically possessing wings and horns to denote their demonic nature, while their wanton sexuality is something they show off at all times. The idea of the tempting succubus is appealing in the modern world because heightened sexuality is something dangerous tied up in something society often warns against overindulging; while some cultures see little problem with sexual expression, too much of it, like anything else, can be detrimental. The succubus perverts an act of intimacy, an act that is the means of procreation and connection, for her own gain, often damaging her victim in some way, whether it is to shorten the lifespan or to make it easier to prey upon the victim the next time. Also

appealing is the idea that the seduction can be resisted or is not so dangerous. People like to believe that actually falling for a pretty face or body is less common, despite continuous evidence to the contrary. The old adage that “it’s what’s inside that counts” is an attempt to allay concerns about a pretty package deceitfully taking one’s confidences. Something of substance must also be present to truly engage a potential partner’s interest beyond the short term.

Mead’s succubus narrator, Georgina Kincaid, in contrast to this view of easy access, has been around for a few centuries and prefers an understated approach to seduction as opposed to the in-your-face approach. While a sexed-up female might appeal for a quick fling, subtlety is required for a more lasting effect. Georgina points to her succubus protégée, Tawny, who is “convinced that the most alluring form she could take [is] that of a six-foot blonde that would have given a human a back injury” (Mead, *Succubus Heat* 20). Tawny wants to be Sex Barbie, believing that wearing a skewed form of society’s ideal beauty will garner more interest from prospective partners. Having more experience, though, Georgina knows that “Tawny [has] miles to go before gaining the subtleties required to land really moral guys” (*Succubus Heat* 21). The idea behind Georgina’s opinion on the physical lure is that a good soul is not necessarily going to be swayed strictly because of a pretty face; there must be some substance behind the façade of seduction to hint at deeper interest. In hiding behind the ordinary, Georgina can present herself as a lesser sexual threat rather than shouting up front that she is after sex, which causes her target to lower his guard to a point at which he could perhaps become intrigued enough to sleep with her when he normally would not. The purpose of the good-guy seduction is to provide the chance to corrupt a good soul and to get a greater jolt of energy for the succubus. As a look Sex Barbie may be enough to attract fleeting interest, but the more subtle approach that appeals to the internal can yield greater interest on the part of the victim, because he feels secure enough that the interest is real to let his guard down and, hopefully for the succubus, engage in some sort of sinful activity, a fact a new succubus like Tawny must learn.

In these worlds, especially in Mead's series, the new succubus or incubus is not suddenly a master of seduction, despite any instincts that may come with being a succubus. He or she has to learn how to use the supernatural skills Hell has bestowed to ensnare a chosen victim, which can take time for the needed talents to develop. A new succubus often starts out in brothels or, in more recent decades, trolling college campuses to get her fix. Learning how seduction works and what techniques to use in what situations is just as important for the succubus as it is for a regular human with no supernatural powers. Understanding psychology and how to use it to tailor the approach to the victim is key for the succubus to be successful, just as it is for any person contemplating approaching someone who has inspired interest. For the White Court vampire of Butcher's series, in contrast, the demon half of the vampire provides certain instincts and urges that can overwhelm the host, especially at the first feeding, which is always lethal for the human partner. In this respect the White Court is closer to the traditional demon than not, as they are distinctly compelled to seek out their prey to satisfy the urges of the supernatural predator within them. A nascent White Court Vampire remarks, "I felt so empty" (Butcher, *Blood Rites* 156), when trying to describe the new, confusing sensation of her demon first beginning to awaken. These new instincts are deeply personal to the vampire, as the demon half of the psyche establishes itself firmly. For a non-White Court individual, the experience "can be profoundly inexpressible, can only be felt, and in no way put into words" (Gostecnik, 584). The awakening of the demon and its Hunger is a fundamental change that shifts perspectives on self-identity, especially upon the realization that people will be hurt because of these new impulses.

Once again, however, True Love helps to mitigate the impact of the demonic Hunger upon the nascent White Court Vampire. Up until the point at which the individual feeds—and kills—for the first time, the demon lies dormant, and there is "[no] vampire stuff at all" in the individual's instincts or basic needs (Butcher, *Blood Rites* 158). Before the awakening the host is human and requires

nothing more than standard human nourishment. To maintain their humanity and to destroy the Hunger before it takes hold, a nascent White Court Vampire must have a first sexual encounter in which the partners mutually feel deeply for each other; if the emotions are at all one-sided, the preventative effect will not occur. This potential cure for the Hunger leads some White Court parents to withhold this information from their offspring until after their first demonic feeding. This creates a bond with the rest of the family as well as establishing the newest vampire's position securely amongst the predators. It is for the good of the whole White Court that the importance of love and other genuine emotions in a relationship is deemphasized so that new members continue to complete the transition into full White Court Vampires.

For Thomas the struggle against his demon is a struggle of his human sanity against the overwhelming needs of the demon in control of a portion of his soul. His fight seems ultimately hopeless as he cannot completely overcome such an integral part of his being, since denying the urge to feed will only lead to a loss of control, and the demon inside will force a feeding to survive. Thomas falls after torture back to embracing his demon; he has lost hope and sees no possibility for love or any other positive experience due to the monster inside him. His faith in his humanity, his ability to leash his demon to his will so as to not be ruled by something beyond his conscious control, is shattered. The breaking of his resistance, though, comes at the hands of a creature that feeds off the fear it generates, and the fear that he will lose himself to his demon is, perhaps, Thomas's greatest. When his struggle is revealed, it is noted that "[the struggle] may destroy him, but he will not surrender himself to it" (Butcher, *Blood Rites* 171). Despite his despair, Thomas is stronger than he realizes, and his basic nature, his yearning to be free of his demonic Hunger will push him to self-destruct rather than to completely and utterly give in to it. His inner struggle with a literal demon mirrors the struggle humans have between their base wants and desires and the things they know they should want instead; for those with overwhelming urges, the fear of being lost in the inner turmoil exists as a tangible

consideration. In the end Thomas's hope and faith in himself may still exist beneath the depression and fear he feels for his failure in the face of torture; when put to the test, he is ultimately forced to surrender to his demon for survival, something Thomas must overcome if he is to successfully rise above the shackles of control currently around him. For his rebellion against his nature, Thomas is considered abnormal because his basic good nature refuses to victimize people indiscriminately; he is rather careful in when and how he feeds, always careful to do as little damage as possible.

Like Thomas, Georgina wants to be the least harmful succubus she can be, a resolution that is tested when she falls in love with author Seth Mortensen. In the course of her rocky relationship with Seth, Georgina feels a deep connection with this mortal, who has one of the purest souls she has ever encountered. Because he is so moral, Georgina would seriously shorten his life should they have sex, straining her conviction to cause as little harm as she can. The two share a deeper connection than anything Georgina has experienced in her long existence. According to Gostecnik, such a "feeling of timelessness [...] is a fundamental component of a sacred experience" between two people with the deepest of feelings for one another (584). As Georgina discovers more about her connection to Seth, she realizes that they are, indeed, connected on the level of their very souls; both will be damned to Hell unless she can find a way to get out of her contract with Hell. When giving the option of saving her own soul while damning Seth's, Georgina adamantly declares, "I wouldn't abandon him—not now, not ever" (Mead, *Succubus Revealed* 245). Leaving Seth to suffer in Hell for her own freedom is not a choice for Georgina; his welfare is just as important to her, so much so that she would rather they be saved or damned together than to accept the eternal consignment of their souls to different fates. Self-sacrifice for another person's happiness or well-being is the ultimate antithesis of selfishness, a lesson Georgina learns after centuries of succubus experiences.

Sexual pleasure is something to be shared and cherished between partners who wish to express their feelings in the physical act. Pure emotional love is not enough to express one's feelings, especially

when the feelings are deep enough to create a physical reaction that needs to be released. Humans are, after all, driven towards the process of procreation as a means of affirming life, a process made all the more sacred when the partners have an established emotional attachment. Thomas Raith tells his brother, “Love killed the dinosaurs, man [...] it was love that turned the tide” to allow mammals to survive and adapt over their reptile competitors in the extinction conditions present on the planet (Butcher, *Blood Rites* 160), pushing the small creatures to sacrifice for their mates and young in ways the reptiles could not. Humans are the successors to this love, something we can feel and experience but never completely adequately describe. Enjoyment of anything without an underlying support is an empty indulgence that means nothing in the long run. That we can see the humanity of a demonized creature opens up possibilities for what it means to have true experiences, and if that happens, then the demon has performed its function of warning against meaningless extravagances.

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YOU NEED TO CONTROL THAT SNAKE:
UNDRESSING THE VEIL OF SEXUALITY IN
BLACK SNAKE MOAN THROUGH READINGS OF *THE*
CRUCIBLE AND THE BIBLE

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Sex and Religion are two separate entities that often conflict with one another. Religion typically aims to instruct individuals on proper morality and conduct, while sex is viewed as taboo if done outside the sanctity of marriage. Religion acts as an umbrella over sexuality because it refers to sexual intercourse as a sin if practiced before marriage. In addition, religion often tries to regulate sexuality even within marriage; sexuality in marriage in the orthodox, Christian sense is only supposed to be focused on procreation, not pleasure or desire “ (Erben). Thus, conservative Christian denominations also prohibit contraception for married couples, because it implies the sexual activity without the purpose of procreation and thus the gratification of other impulses. The bible tells us to “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body, but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body” (Corinthians 6:18). The scripture acts as the instruction manual to which many live by; for the holy manuscript to bequeath fornication as immoral, constrains human’s sexual freedom. The Christian faith wants for mankind to control their cravings, impulses, and sexual appetite until a holy union is reached. Sexual freedom and sensual physicality are problematic within the realm of human kind. *Black Snake Moan* directed by Craig Brewer and *The Crucible* written by Arthur Miller, boldly depicts the effects of Religion on sexuality. Both works showcase how religion can serve as a bias grade of an individual’s morality and how it provides power and persuasion over the meek.

Lazarus a poor African American, Christian farmer who seems to be undergoing many trials in his personal life comes across

a beautiful Caucasian woman, Rae. Rae has been dumped in front of Lazarus' home after she has been brutally violated and beaten. After conducting somewhat of a background check, he finds that Rae is a very promiscuous person. Lazarus views her sexual appetite as a sin and aims to cure her of her treachery, so he chains Rae to his radiator and forces her to undergo somewhat of a rehabilitation. Lazarus embodies the façade associated with Christianity; while Rae is a solid symbol of sexual freedom. Both main characters are extreme representations of their entities and work to dominate each other. Lazarus and Rae's relationship correlates with the societal constraints of today in which individuals are criticized for sex before marriage by the church.

There is a strong correlation through religion to this story and Abigail's tale within *the Crucible*. Abigail's religious ambiguity within the novel, relates heavily to the sanctity of religion and how it becomes an extension of power when placed in the wrong hands; while also conveying how sexuality and adultery are troubling qualities within the confines of the church. Abigail displays similarities with Lazarus through her connection with religion and her seductive sexuality is similar to Rae's. Abigail, Rae and Lazarus show how Christianity can work to dominate and relinquish sin/sexual freedom from the hearts of the perceived wicked. *The Crucible and Black Snake Moan's* essential characters act as parallels between each other because they utilize sexuality and religion as the motives for their actions. In *The Crucible*, religion plays an intricate role in the realm of sex and politics. The work manages to display how religion can become detrimental if infused with politics, and how sex can affect a person's spiritual stability. Abigail showcases how sexual frustration can work as a muse for revenge. After being released from her duties as a servant for her lustful relationship with local farmer, John Proctor, Abigail rebels and conspires against Mrs. Proctor. Abigail Williams uses sex as the motivational force behind her mischief within the play. The anguish and jealousy she channels for the Proctor household is what inherently coaxes her to destroy the serenity within her little town. Abigail is bitter about her failed relationship with John

Proctor, and resolves that she will murder the farmer's wife. John Proctor's infidelity causes him to push Abigail away because he is ashamed of his sinful act and wants to disassociate himself for partaking in adultery. *The Crucible* manages to convey how easy it is to develop a sense of fear within people by keying on religion and intrinsic anxieties, similar to the manner in which Lazarus uses religion as his reasoning for controlling Rae. Abigail's un-fulfillment in her relationship with Jon Proctor works as the primary catalyst for Abigail's persecution of her community which also correlates with Lazarus' un-fulfillment within his marriage and his need for spiritual satisfaction. Both Lazarus and Abigail use sexuality and religion as tools of power to acquire a sense of control within their uncontrolled spaces.

Lazarus is a character who enthralls himself in religion as a way to cope with his heart ache; he undergoes a rejuvenation process, similar to Lazarus in the Bible. The opening of the film showcases Lazarus' backstory. He is a man who is going through a divorce with an ex-wife, who has no consideration for his feelings. She has undergone an abortion without his consent, committed adultery, and ran off with Lazarus' brother which acts as a form of incest. Lazarus' metaphorically possesses a dead heart that is in need of reconciliation at the beginning of the film. Lazarus's story in the bible connects with the concept of resurrection and faith. These are two qualities that Lazarus toils with in the film.

Lazarus from the holy stories is a close comrade of Jesus, who dies of natural causes. The people call on Jesus for assistance, but Jesus waits four days before coming to their aid. The people weep and complain because he arrives so late, but he silences them by resurrecting the dead Lazarus from his burial place. The people lost faith, so "Jesus wept," and cried because of the little belief the people had in him (John 11:35). Lazarus of *Black Snake Moan's* story parallels with the Biblical Lazarus' through thematic interpretation. Lazarus is a character that toils intrinsically with faith after his traumatic marriage and finds himself trying to rejuvenate his faith in Christ. When Rae enters his life, she acts as the stimulant for his revitaliza-

tion within Christ. Lazarus aims to diminish Rae's wicked qualities and revitalize her as a pure being, similar to Christ's miracle.

Lazarus showcases his dissolution with Christ and the anger he holds for his marital predicament when he confronts his brother, Deke, for stealing his wife. Lazarus breaks a bottle over his brother's head after Deke expresses his love. He holds a broken bottle over his brother's face and spouts out some biblical references "Cain slew Able, slew him out of envy. God put his mark on Cain for his sins, is that what you want Deke? Huh? Is that what you come here for? I'll do it for you, all you got to do is say it again... Say you love me" (Brewer 0:23). This scene showcases how Lazarus has the ability to channel his religion through anger. Even when entrenched in anger he showcases his faith to Christ. This scene shows how religion plays an extreme part of Lazarus' life and how he uses it to justify his negative actions.

Rae's sexuality is depicted as a sickness within the film, which shows the negative stigma attached to uncontrolled sexual activity. Rae is a loose cannon in the film who is unwillingly coaxed to undergo rehabilitation by Lazarus. Before encountering Lazarus she indulged in drugs and a plethora of sexual activity. Brewer constructs Rae as a sex crazed lunatic. After finding Rae bleeding, bruised, and pale in his front yard, Lazarus attempts to revive Rae. She has a bad cough and sees a blurred image of Lazarus. She assumes that he is a black man she chronically has sexual escapades with. She cries out an unknown name to Lazarus, "Tehronne!" (Brewer 0:33). Lazarus decides to seek out Tehronne and find out who this woman is. Lazarus finds the local drug dealer, Tehronne, who partakes in sexual acts with Rae and asks about her, Rae says, "She has to get the dick or she goes crazy" (Brewer 0:34). Tehronne describes her as a woman who has no control of her body or morals. The movie later unveils that her actions stem from sexual abuse. The movie depicts Rae's sexuality as a sickness, not an activity that stems from pleasure or desire. The movie showcases Rae as a character who has no control of her life and who is in dire need of stability. Rae screams sexuality and eroticism from her risqué clothing to her seductive movements.

In the opening scene, Rae walks in front of a tractor with her cut off shirt and her skin tight shorts. The camera pans her up and down, attempting to display her alluring body as she walks (Brewer 0:05). The camera examines Rae's body throughout the film, slowly panning over every curve of her body and her body is always moist with sweat. The director is attempting to seduce audiences with the camera angles and Rae's wardrobe. Every move or action that she takes in the beginning of the film is a movement that assists her in getting closer to fulfilling her sexual desires. Nathan Lee describes Rae as a "Next-level nymphomania, feeling the urge come on like a hurricane gathering momentum, decimating everything in its path, big black eye of the storm going wide and wider, gobbling up every fuck and drug in sight. Hearty helpings of cock and Oxycontin?" She is an individual who punishes herself with drugs and sex to compensate for the pain she has not dealt with. The director works hard to display Rae's lack of control and sexual indentations in order to show the negative effects of spontaneous sexual acts. The movie does not condemn Rae completely, but shows her as a lost woman who is in great need. She is in need of a doctor or someone who can remove those demons within her. That's where Lazarus comes in.

Abigail uses the infidelity and her supposed child-like innocence to cloud the community's perception of her and to have an upper hand over John Proctor. Seductivity plays a large role in both works, because throughout *Black Snake Moan*, Rae is using her body as a tool to satisfy her inward desires. Abigail's sexual treachery does not mold her into a scorned woman, but makes her a danger to the society she abides in. Similarly Lazarus' traumatic marriage does not necessarily destroy his reputation, but causes him to lean more on spirituality for strength. Religion and sex are tools for Abigail to achieve supremacy over the community, while Lazarus uses this motif to gain and sustain control over his white hostage. Abigail Williams shakes up the hypocrisy embedded within her gender confines when she initially promotes the idea of witchcraft plaguing the community. Abigail inherently displays power through her vocality and dramatic exploits. She

has convulsions and theatrical spells to dupe the townspeople into siding with her. Similarly Rae has sporadic convulsions that act as a sign for her sexual thirst. Abigail's first attempt of deception and control is when she makes John Proctor feel guilty for their sexual relationship. She says, "I know how you clutched my back behind your house and sweated like a stallion whenever I come near? Or did I dream that?" (Miller 21) She is implementing a hint of sarcasm and an erotic tone in order to remind Proctor of his connection with her. She knows that he does not want to besmirch the name of his family, but she desperately wants to be his wife. In this portion of the play, Abigail is making a valiant attempt to seduce Mr. Proctor. Proctor's denies her, causing her to feel scorned and angry. Though she doesn't succeed in obtaining Proctor's love, she does have a clear understanding of his regret. Proctor conveys his denial when he says, "Wipe it out of mind. We never touched" (Miller 22). Proctor has given Abigail a large portion of control over him, through his guilt for his discrepancies. She can now continue unraveling evil sentiments among the town because she knows that Proctor has inadvertently taken a vow of silence in matters regarding her. This moment in the novel also correlates with the reasoning behind Rae's promiscuity, when her boyfriend leaves for the army she falls into a pool of depression and erotic behavior which coincides with Abigail's evil sentiments. She has no one to intervene against her plan of action until the time in which Proctor confesses his sin. Lazarus does not necessarily make Rae feel guilty for her past indiscretions but solely intends to control for her wrong doing.

Black Snake Moan is a film that also inherently showcases gender dominance. Men have the upper hand in this film. The director strategically makes sex disingenuous when it pertains to guilt in order to leave then men who use her body un-persecuted. Rae is raped and beaten twice in the film with no negative indications attached to the men's actions. The director strategically places the responsibility of her situation and the predicaments that she finds herself in, solely on Rae. She is not exonerated from her actions even though she clearly has an addiction and sickness.

Brewer makes Rae cough at the beginning of the film; while she is enthralled in sin; so her deeds can be associated with a bad sickness. The movie continually reiterates that sex is something that Rae needs to cope with life and makes sex somewhat like a drug addiction. Men act as Rae's drug supplier, continuously providing her with a fix or forcing themselves into her. Throughout the film, no man is condemned for his sexual impurities against Rae, but she is chastised for her impure actions. "Rae who needs to be "cured" and not the men who heedlessly usher for sex, with or without her consent" (Lakshima). In Lazarus' attempt to cure Rae, he covertly dominates her physically and mentally without partaking in any sexual activities with her. Lazarus is in a dark space within the film and depends on his spiritual beliefs to cope with his hurt. He inherently punishes Rae for her actions. He chains her to a radiator so that she is immobile, ultimately controlling her body as a whole. He also manages to change the clothing that she wears from risqué to a wardrobe that is less revealing. After making Rae immobile he continuously engrains her in Bible scripture in an attempt to get her to acknowledge her wrong doing. He is dominating Rae both physically and mentally through these actions. Lazarus is attempting to rehabilitate the young woman, but viewers may interpret Lazarus' action as an attempt to trying to control her. Masculinity overpowers femininity in this film, making it a work that does not condemn sexual promiscuity among men, but describes premarital sexual activity a sin if done by a woman.

Lazarus uses religion as his alibi for controlling Rae though he has no backing from the reverend, yet Abigail manages to utilize religious figures to her advantage. Abigail uses the community's spirituality as a way to condemn innocent citizens. She understands that her community is infatuated with the realm of religion. Opposed to the towns views on spirituality, Abigail is less enchanted with the ideals entrenched in her community. Abigail's personality ties strongly with Rae's, because initially both individuals are not infatuated with the concept of religion and rather use sexual exploit to showcase their power. When conversing with John Proctor, Abigail says, "I never knew the

lying lessons I was taught by all these Christian women and their covenanted men” (Miller 22). Abigail is expressing the detachment she feels within her religion and within her community. Her severed ties with Proctor have broken her connection with religion and morality. As the trials unfold, Abigail renounces her demons and professes her loyalty to Christ, “I want the light of God, I want the sweet love of Jesus! I danced for the Devil; I saw him; I wrote in his book; I go back to Jesus... . I saw Sarah Good with the Devil” (Miller 45). She uses her deceptive talents to make the town feel she is in accordance with the church. After her dramatic exploit and her confession to the townspeople, she begins to persecute people within the community. This ideology contrasts with Lazarus who leans on his spirituality for clear guidance even in negative actions. Abigail has put on a show for the town. The sham allows for her to hide behind her religion and persecute citizens. At this moment within the play, there is a veil created that shows a two-ness within Abigail. There is the afflicted young girl the town sees and the evil woman readers and John Proctor know her to be. Rae has a twoness as well, there is the whore the town has labeled her, and the sexually assaulted girl within her subconscious. W.E.B Dubois’s double consciousness theory plays an important role in the identification of Abigail’s metaphorical veil. Dubois writes, “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness” (Dubois). Both Abigail and Rae have put on a façade for so long that they have created a barrier that has torn them in two. They have their interpretations of the two women, but have not unsheathed the promiscuous tramp and lost little girl cloaked under the veil. Abigail receives contempt and pity for her involvement with the devil and Rae receives criticism and gawking from her counterparts but their treatment ultimately has no correlation with the “warring souls” within them (Dubois).

The Crucible advocates that sexual infidelity and personal pleasure can be the downfall of a communal infrastructure. Abigail

Williams uses her severed sexual relationship with John Proctor as the motive for her attempt on Elizabeth's (John Proctor's wife) life. Through her conniving tactics, she manages to maneuver through many obstacles and persecute a plethora of people for death, including Proctor's wife. The play conveys that this sinful act is something that can cause the deterioration of everything around an individual, similar to John Proctor. This ideology correlates with Georges Bataille's concept of Eroticism, he states, "Eroticism, it may be said, is assenting to life up to the point of death"(1). It is the character's sexual indiscretions that lead to the deaths of the innocent people. Adultery is the action that bore animosity and hatred within Abigail, her animosity and hatred results in the blood of innocent civilians. Adultery and sexual indiscretions play an imperative role in both works. Adultery act as the catalyst for inhumane actions in both works. Lazarus is created n by his wife so he aims to purify women of their wickedness, Rae has sex with a variety of men, and Abigail's adulterated act results in the condemnation of townspeople.

Though Masculinity is a dominating entity within the film in regards to Rae, Religion serves as a symbol of power and dominance in her life as well. Lazarus relies heavily on religious indentations when attempting to change Rae's life. He continuously spats out bible verses and religious tales in order to enthrall Rae in his ideology. He is adamant about changing her life, but finds that he has demons that he is toiling with as well. Lazarus showcases religion as an addiction similar to Rae's sexual addiction. He uses his spirituality as the stimulant and reasoning behind his control of Rae. He is genuinely trying to help her through the inhumane deed of chaining her to the radiator. The scene in which Rae initially wakes up from her deep sleep and realizes that she has been chained is when Lazarus explains to her is intentions, he says, "God put you in my path and I aim to cure you of your wicked ways" (Brewer 0:48). Lazarus is justifying his actions once again through religion and using his spirituality as his motif for chaining Rae. Brewer constructs Lazarus as the religious interpretation within the film. Though Rae has a sexual addiction, Lazarus in turn has a

spiritual addiction that manifests itself through his chaining of Rae. Lisa Mullen conveys that “Brewer is not interested in pondering whether those who swap addiction for God are just substituting one kind of bondage for another. Far from it: not only is he not prepared to scrutinize Lazarus’ patriarchal assumption that women must be kept on a leash for their own good— the final shocking realization is that he endorses it.” Though Lazarus has an addiction he is not condemned or scrutinized within the film. He is not charged with any crime or subjugated to any bad karma, but almost glorified for his actions. Rae actually becomes less sexually enthralled because Lazarus commits this inhumane act.

The director also attempts to play with race in the Deep South by interchanging the roles of the oppressors and enslaved. Brewer changes the dynamic of historical racial dominance by making a poor African American farmer the master of free and vibrant white woman. It is a complete switch on social norms and history. Historically African American males have been stereotyped as sexually driven beings within film. African Americans were often referred to as Brutes. Wiki defines black brutes as “African American men who are inherently violent, savage, and immoral beings.” Brutes are typically depicted as sexually driven beings who indulge in ravaging white women, while whites often play a dynamic role in film. Brewer implicitly swaps these social taboos in order to diverge the focus of the film from race in the South to sexual morality and religious ambiguity. Chaudry Lamshiki states that “The two most powerful symbols of slavery in *Black Snake Moan* are writ large on Rae’s body: the chains around her waist and the rebel flag on her T-shirt. These images evoke the specter of white wrongdoing but also reframe her enslavement—which is supposed to be OK because Lazarus is black and Rae is white, and we all know what that means in the South. What makes the movie truly offensive is that it employs race to peddle its brand of misogyny.” Lamshiki believes that though Brewer does switch the social norms, he still flirts with the concept of race in

the film. She believes that the film is embellished with images of racism and segregation within the film.

Rae is a lost soul within the film, who finds difficulty in coping with her transgressive acts. There is one moment in the film, where she is conversing with the level headed, Reverend R.L. She asks him “Why do people dote on spirituality and heaven so much?” Reverend R.L. replies, “Ima tell you something and it's just gonna be between you and me. I think folks carry on about heaven too much, like it's some kind of all you can eat buffet up in the clouds and folks just do as they told so they can eat what they want behind some pearly gates. There's sinning in my heart, there's evil in the world but when I got no one, I talk to God. I ask for strength, I ask for forgiveness, not peace at the end of my days when I got no more life to live or no more good to do but today, right now... What's your heaven? (Brewer)” The reverend assists in the rehabilitation of Rae, explaining to her that the afterlife is not what she should be concentrating on, but she should worry about the sins she commits on a daily basis. He serves as the one individual within the film who does not critique her for her past. He conveys to her that her life can be tuned around if she does better. This moment in the film also conveys the distance that the preacher has with spirituality. This moment shows that even those at the top of the religious hierarchy must not indulge too much in religious folklore as Lazarus has. Reverend R.L. inherently conveys that his slight dissociations with everyday spirituality brings him slightly closer to morality, making the idea of Christianity more alluring to a woman who has indulged in sinful acts.

Black Snake Moan is a modern interpretation of how religion and sex can work as two controlling entities. The film also shows how both can work as addictions and cause negative extension if not controlled properly. Lazarus acts as a dominating presence within the film spitting scripture and religious notions at the heavily chastised Rae. He stands strong by his religious principles and is unswaying on his perspective pertaining to his actions. The film shows religion as a domineering presence over sexual freedom and further implies that sexuality can only be driven away from

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the spirit through a rigorous and physical spiritual trial. "I ain't gonn' be moved on this. Right or wrong, you gonn' mind me. Like Jesus Christ said, "Imma suffa' you" (Brewer 0:48).

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**THE VULCANS OF *STAR TREK*:
BINDING THE SPIRITUAL AND SEXUAL
SIDES OF HUMANITY**

CRYSTAL ANN LAMINACK

In Gene Roddenberry's *Star Trek*, Spock and the other Vulcans become the focus of both spirituality and sexuality due to both the alien heritage of the characters and the connections to humanity. *Star Trek* takes place 300 years in the future, where the Earth has become a part of a "postcapitalist social and technological utopia" (Kozinets 60), and it follows the exploration of a spacecraft called the *Enterprise* and other vessels in the sequels as they follow their directive to "explore strange new worlds, [...] seek out new life and new civilizations, [...] boldly go where no man has gone before" ("Amok Time" 02:28). In the mid-1960s, despite censorship, Gene Roddenberry strove to make the television series *Star Trek* tackle both positive and negative religious attitudes as well as incorporating sexual situations that he claimed were a "matter of geometry and measurement" (85). Sheila Schwartz comments in her article "Science Fiction: Bridge between the Two Cultures," that science fiction evolved to incorporate controversial issues including religion and sexuality to respond to scientific change and the human condition (1044). *Star Trek* becomes a study of humanity from its use of aliens, and it reflects American culture as "accurately, spiritually, and factually, as the work of Charles Dickens reflected the Victorian world" (1044), and it is through the series that a bridge finally connects the realms of spiritually and sexuality. Vulcan spirituality of strict adherence to logic and the veneration of sexual customs through rituals prove a direct connection between the spiritual and the physical aspects of the body and through this connection religion and sex become one balanced aspect of human identity.

The universe depicted in *Star Trek* represents religion and sexuality as totalizing and estranging respectfully (Small 46); however, Vulcans allow a close look at the juxtaposition between religious and sexual extremes as they harmonize to create a peaceful and enlightened being. Instead of showing Vulcans as monstrous creatures by using the “diabolic, reptilian, or nightmare attributes traditionally used in describing aliens” (45), *Star Trek* creates a sense of sympathy and companionship which allows the audience to completely accept Vulcans as a part of humanity. Vulcans, such as T’Pau, show a deep connection to the teachings of Surak, “the father of Vulcan logic” (“The Forge” 07:45) and represent a fully enlightened being. Other Vulcans such as Spock, Tuvok, and T’Pol show how different interpretations of logic can still combine with physical desires to create a balanced person within humanity. Tuvok’s instructor teaches that logic is both “hidden, for you to find, or in plain sight, for you to ignore” (“Gravity” 1:38), which means a Vulcan can choose how to interpret logic and it is different for each person. Different ideas on how to interpret logic appear in the prequel *Enterprise* when the ruling party of Vulcan believe that power and control exist logically as a means to intervene with other races, and T’Pau helps reform the teachings to logic for Vulcans to create a power peaceful presence: “You may be witnessing the start of a new era, not only for Vulcan, but for Earth as well [...] You’ll no longer have us looking over your shoulder; it’s time for Earth to stand on its own (“Kir’shara” 40:53). Vulcans have the freedom to pursue their own versions of logic and the ways they choose to live their lives, whether in space or on planet Vulcan.

While many “aliens of the week,” or non-reappearing characters, appear religious, these characters present spirituality similar to Christianity as inferior as these aliens never gain their personal freedoms; and yet a Vulcan, whose religion seems to be based on Shinto and Buddhism, shows that not only can one gain acceptance, but also command respect and authority. Science fiction tends to find Christianity and other established religions and spirituality classified as alien (Small 33), and Gene Roddenberry

shares this belief because he pushes Christian-like religions to those “aliens of the week” and shows most institutionalized religions as corrupt. For instance, in *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier*, a Vulcan named Sybok believes he has found God and commandeers the Enterprise to travel to God’s location; however, the being that claims to be God is actually an alien criminal who only wants an escape from his prison. In her article “Religious Institutions in Spanish Science Fiction,” Elizabeth Small questions why *Star Trek* did not present itself as exclusively secular considering the humans on the Enterprise tend to exhibit nonreligious ideas (37); Vulcan logic takes on a spiritual foundation within the series, and it is characters such as Spock that prove both humanity’s position in the universe and the importance of spirituality through his representation of logic as the answer to all questions. Michael Jindra comments that “one’s religion need not be articulated as belief, but is more often an ongoing experience” (30); Spock’s logic is not an existing, contemporary religion, and yet Vulcan spirituality proves to unite his people together while also giving them the choice to pursue logic in different ways. Meditation and a rigorous control over both mental and bodily functions show that Vulcans concern themselves with the end of suffering and attempt to bring balance to their lives: “We had our wars Admiral, just as humans did. Our planet was devastated, our civilization nearly destroyed. Logic saved us, but it took almost 1500 years for us to rebuild our world and travel to the stars” (“The Forge” 04:15). The Vulcan philosophy, “Infinite diversity in infinite combinations” (“Gravity” 00:40), or simply called IDIC, shows that Vulcans have the freedom to interpret logic in many different ways without fear of persecution. Some Vulcans need to distance themselves from the rituals and practices of Vulcan spirituality while at the same time interpreting what they believe is logical; for instance, in *Enterprise*, T’Pol meets a group of Vulcans who revel in all possible experiences and emotions (Smith 87). Human characters also find that logic also has a purpose in overcoming experienced suffering; in a scene from *Star Trek: Voyager* Ensign Harry Kim visits Tuvok to learn about the disciplines governing the control of emotions because he wants to

be able to function without an emotional attachment to someone who cannot return his feelings: “I know that Vulcans use certain techniques [...] I’m willing to learn” (“Alter Ego” 2:23).

Religions often teach followers to seek peace by balancing the opposing extremes that comprise identities (Kraemer, Cassidy, and Schwartz 120), and balancing oppositions within the body and mind Vulcan characters learn to master before they reach adulthood. Similar to Buddhism’s practice of renouncing emotion, Vulcans mediate privately in order to examine and repress emotions to remain in control of the mental processes: “Emotions can be a powerful tool, to deny their existence is illogical, but you must learn to control them” (“Gravity” 02:00). In “Star Trek Fandom as a Religious Phenomenon,” Michael Jindra comments that religion can be considered both a “system of private, conscious and articulated beliefs set off from other ‘spheres’ of life such as work, politics, or leisure” and a “religious practice...intimately connected to everyday life” (30), and the personal habits of Vulcan characters prove both of these interpretations true through their adherence to meditation and rituals and their ability to use logic to strengthen all aspects of their daily lives. In “Amok Time,” Spock ends up leaving his intended wife, T’Pring, to return to the Enterprise where he has found acceptance of his differences among humans, which is similar to the Buddhist story of the future Buddha leaving his wife to find enlightenment and never returning (Bishop 70), because Spock will never return to T’Pring again.

Vulcans learn through mastering their mind and body that they also have control over their *katra*, or soul. *Katras* appear throughout Vulcan spirituality, and there are even rituals, called *fal-tor-pan*, that can transfer a *katra* from one person to another; in *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*, Spock’s father explains to his son’s closest friend, Captain Kirk, what should have happened when Spock was killed, “Only his body was in death, Kirk, and you were the last one to be with him [...] He entrusted you with his very essence, with everything that was not of the body. He asked you to bring him to us and to bring that which he gave you, his *katra*, his living spirit” (*Star Trek III* 24:11). Typically the *katra* is

transferred to another person's mind in order to gain insight into wisdom, and those who can manipulate kattras are well trained in Vulcan spirituality similar to the practices of shamans in the modern Shinto religion from Japan. Shinto developed from rituals surrounding the death of people and animals, and a Shaman handles the souls of humans through "life, suffering, and afterlife of that which is considered immortal" (Kraemer, Cassidy, and Schwartz 105); *Star Trek* incorporates Shamanistic practices in the third film *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*. Rituals within the Vulcan spirituality seem to have few limitations. The Vulcan high priestess T'Lar captures Spock's katra from the mind of Doctor McCoy, who had been the last person Spock touched before he sacrificed his life, and returns it to his resurrected and soulless body through the use of the fal-tor-pan ritual. The Shaman-like priests and priestesses typically preserve the spirit and knowledge of the kattras belonging to deceased Vulcans, and even a conversation between Kirk and Admiral Morrow sheds light on outside ideas of the Vulcan soul:

Kirk: One man has died for us.

Morrow: This business about Spock, honestly, I never understood Vulcan mysticism.

Kirk: You don't have to believe, I'm not even sure that I believe. But if there's even a chance Spock has an eternal soul, then it's my responsibility [...] as surely as if it were my very own. (*Star Trek III* 31:50)

Religious beliefs, like that of the katra, come in sets, and those "who elevate the soul over the body often associate the body with [...] the feminine; the soul is associated with...the masculine" (Kraemer, Cassidy, and Schwartz 177), which shows that a person is made up of different opposing expressions and ideas. Vulcan characters highlight the oppositions of the body and mind living in harmony within one body; in one episode of the original series, Spock comments on the combination of different oppositions by saying, "The glory of creation is in its infinite diversity and the

ways our differences combine to create beauty and meaning” (“Is There in Truth No Beauty” 48:40). Spock himself is half-human and half-Vulcan and that dual heritage drives him to focus mainly on his Vulcan spirituality as compensation to the perceived disadvantage that his human emotions negatively affect his view of logic.

Vulcan children participate in spiritual mating rituals that bind a couple together mentally so they will physically know when they must meet to consummate their marriage when they are older. The ritual is called *koon-ut-so'lik*, meaning marriage or proposal, and is overseen by the parents of the Vulcan children when they are seven years old (“Amok Time” 25:45). In the prequel series, simply known as *Enterprise*, T’Pol mentions that she has met her intended husband, Koss, four times since childhood and “It’s assumed that we would eventually develop an affection for one another [...] His parents planned the union” (“Breaking the Ice” 32:02), which shows that marriages are chosen based on the family’s intentions for their children’s futures and unions should be slow building but rooted in a child’s past so that he or she always knows that the two of them will be connected when the mating drive known as *pon farr* begins. In “Amok Time,” Spock’s sick body and mind calls out to T’Pring and before he can land on the planet Vulcan, she contacts him and the conversation that follows proves that their minds are deeply connected:

T’Pring: Spock. It is I.

Spock: T’Pring, parted from me, but never parted, never and always touching and touched. We meet at the appointed place.

T’Pring: Spock, parted from me but never parted, never and always touching and touched. I await you. (23:00)

Until the Vulcans complete the marriage ritual, the union remains “Less than a marriage, but more than a betrothal” (“Amok Time” 25:51), which shows how deeply connected the young couple is bound together mentally. When they meet for their marriage ceremony, the *koon-ut-kal-if-fee* begins.

The physical body also becomes subjected to Vulcan spirituality through their reverence of sexual rituals and contact. In the episode “Amok Time,” Spock appears to slowly lose his ability to control both his mind and body, which he explains is a “ritual and custom shrouded in antiquity” (15:30). This marks the beginning of Pon Farr, which occurs every seven years. Vulcan males, and some females, must return to their home-planet of Vulcan to participate in a ritual of marriage and sex or their bodies will overload with a chemical similar to adrenaline and die. “Amok Time” shows the revered koon-ut-kal-if-fee ritual, or “marriage or challenge,” which brings together two people who have been arranged to marry. If the bride-to-be wishes to not marry her intended husband, she can proclaim the ritual challenge that will force her intended husband to fight against a champion of her own choosing. T’Pring, Spock’s intended wife, calls for the challenge of ritual combat and fortunately Spock’s participation in the challenge is enough to bring an end to his pon farr and reestablish peace to the inner oppositions that war within every human being. *Enterprise* shows T’Pol participating in her own marriage to a Vulcan named Koss; the priest who resides over the ritual proclaims that the ceremony is “the Vulcan heart...the Vulcan soul” (“Home” 41:36). The idea that the ritual represents both the heart, or the body, and the soul shows that a human being is only complete when both the physical and the spiritual are united.

For a Vulcan, the mating drive, pon farr, begins once adulthood is reached, and the instinct that males generally experience is assumed to be a stripping of the Vulcan logic leaving only the animal desires; however, Vulcans are still bound to the ritual of koon-ut-kal-if-fee and can function almost normally, if only more emotionally, which T’Pau seems surprised when Spock is even able to voice his concerns logically: “He speaks” (“Amok Time” 33:35). T’Pau explains the supposed loss of control is called the plak tow, or blood fever, which Dr. McCoy describes as “a growing imbalance of body functions, as if in our bodies huge amounts of adrenaline were constantly being pumped in our blood streams [...] if it isn’t stopped somehow, the physical and emotional

pressures will simply kill him” (“Amok Time” 11:16). Pon farr cycles every seven years as if it were a time piece compelling the Vulcan race to mate according to a naturally evolved and logical schedule to keep the population of Vulcan level. Vulcans can live much longer than humans, and the need to reproduce to ensure the continuation of the race seems to be less customary than compared to humans. Tuvok is taught as a child that “Love is the most dangerous emotion of all, it produces many other emotions: jealousy, shame, rage, grief...they will consume you.” (“Gravity” 23:15), and yet his marriage to T’Pel remains successful due to their mental and physical connections that produce his four children. *Enterprise’s* T’Pol becomes confined to the decontamination chamber because she was exposed to a chemical that brought on a premature pon farr (“Bounty” 20:45), and even in her irrationality to find a male to mate with, she is able to still command knowledge of electronics and self-defense which should not be possible if a Vulcan is stripped of their “civilization” as Spock claims (“Amok Time” 15:47). Vulcans experience pon farr as part of the body’s logical need to reproduce, and their reluctance to talk about sexual customs shows that they do regulate sex with the spiritual because they regard sexuality as private as their spiritual rituals and “no out-worlder may know, except those very few who have been involved” (“Amok Time” 13:01).

Vulcans practice other methods of private exercises that prove to be both spiritual and sexual in nature such as the mind meld. Mind melds have the ability to achieve many different purposes including the exchange of knowledge, the ability to influence emotions, and the creation of beliefs through touching souls. Gene Roddenberry’s “vision of the future religious belief and practice does not so much disappear as retire to the private realm” (Kraemer, Cassidy, and Schwartz 9), and even Spock confirms that a mind meld is a “hidden personal thing to the Vulcan people, part of our private lives” (“Daggers of the Mind” 29:10), which proves that the mind meld roots itself within Vulcan spirituality. In *Star Trek: Voyager*, the latest sequel to the original series, Tuvok initiates a mind meld with a psychotic crewman

who comments on the personal nature of the meld as if it was a sexual act: “penetration, your will dissolving [my will]. The joining.” (“Meld” 29:50). Vulcans treat mind melds as sacred and precious and do not enter into them lightly; before he melds, Spock’s father, Sarek asks “May I join your mind” (*Star Trek III: The Search for Spock* 25:35) as if he were asking to join intimately and bodily. At the conclusion of a different mind meld he explains, “We shall always retain the best part of the other inside us” (“Sarek” 43:37), which demonstrates the joining of two minds like a sexual experience. In the same ways that intercourse can be violent, mind melds have the same dangers: “In a way, a mind meld is almost an act of violence [...] It seems to me that a mind meld might be fatal if you lost control” (Meld 30:00). In the sixth film *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*, Spock also participates in a mind meld against the wishes of a Vulcan woman named Valeris; Spock holds her in his grasp as he violates her mind despite her attempts to pull away and the screams and grunts (01:25:50), which appear and sound like rape. In *Star Trek: Voyager*, a Vulcan named Vorik entered into his first pon farr and attempted to initiate a mind meld with B’Elanna Torres, an officer onboard *Voyager*, which formed a telepathic mating bond and caused Torres to be affected by pon farr in the same way: “I wanted to bond with her, that much I remember clearly” (“Blood Fever” 17:25); the connection between minds caused by a telepathic mating bond ensures that the couple undergoes the mating drive at the same time so that the sexual experience has a greater chance of successfully aiding in reproduction.

Vulcans disprove the belief that there is a split between the body and the mind and create a completely united identity between the spiritual and physical. In the first sequel to the original *Star Trek* series, called *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, both a medical doctor and a counselor work to help the members of the Enterprise’s crew when they become afflicted by different injuries. The presence of two separate doctors shows that many people believe that the divide between the body and mind cannot be connected; however, T’Pau’s conversation with T’Pol regarding the health of

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Captain Jonathan Archer in *Enterprise* shows that the body and mind cannot be separated:

T’Pau: You do not believe in the katra?

T’Pol: It is irrelevant what I believe. The captain could be permanently injured if we don’t get him to a doctor soon.

T’Pau: He doesn’t need a physician; he needs a priest, one experienced with katras. (“Kir’shara” 13:25)

Both T’Pau and T’Pol worry about the katra of Surak, which Captain Jonathan Archer holds in his mind, and even though Archer seems to be mentally ill-prepared to possess a katra, he claims that “Ever since the meld, I’ve felt more centered. It’s hard to explain; my whole life I’ve never really understood Vulcans, why they work so hard to suppress their emotions, now it all seems to make sense, next thing you know I’ll be taking up meditation” (19:50). Similar to Buddhism, T’Pau upholds the spiritual disciplines and teachings in order to show how the mind and body interact with each other through a spiritual sense by practicing logic as the “favored scientific answer to suffering” (Kraemer, Cassidy, and Schwartz 103). Tuvok appears to have balanced his mind and body successfully in *Star Trek: Voyager* and he represents a “traditional scientific perspective” (Roberts 286), and he regards his connections with loved ones as apart from emotions, “they are part of my identity and I am incomplete without them (“Innocence” 18:56).

Balancing the oppositions within the body and mind allows Vulcans to intimately connect sex with their sacred rituals. Karin Blair’s research shows that the word “religion” comes from the word “religare,” which means to bind through love (295), and so a Vulcan’s logic cannot help but incorporate sex and emotion even on the basic level: “It would be illogical for us to protest against our natures” (“Amok Time 20:33). The Vulcan rituals that govern the sexual customs bring to light the complete necessity of sexual practices within a religious society that seems to be focused on more intellectual pursuits such as science and exploration; the hologram Doctor in *Star Trek: Voyager* claims that “For such an intellectually

enlightened race, Vulcans have a remarkably Victorian attitude about sex” (“Blood Fever” 08:53), which emphasizes the deeply personal spirituality of Vulcan sexuality, and even Tuvok refuses to involve himself in another Vulcan’s *pon farr*. Even the reunion of a married couple begins with a ritualistic exchange of vows to show the continued bodily and mentally commitment to one another:

T’Pel: As it was in the dawn of our days, as it will be for all tomorrows, to you, my husband, I consecrate all that I am.

Tuvok: T’Pel, my wife, from you I receive all that I am.

T’Pel: As it was in the beginning, so shall it be now.

Tuvok: Two bodies, one mind. (“Body and Soul” 21:20)

The theory of marriage being the merging of two bodies into one connected mind gives fluidity to strict rituals through the connection and harmony of the mind and body, and this fluid nature sets the sexual aspects of rituals firmly within Vulcan spirituality. *Star Trek* excels in representing different aspects of human life, and Thomas Richards writes in *The Meaning of Star Trek* that characters become islands of humanity (64), which is a mix of cultures, races, religions, and ideas, and it is Gene Roddenberry’s vision of Vulcans who appear so human-like that a study of both spirituality and sexuality can be accomplished. Vulcans highlight the duality of humans in regards to spirituality and sexuality and also unite these opposing elements within a single being. According to *Religions of Star Trek* by Ross S. Kraemer, William Cassidy, and Susan L. Schwartz, oppositions exist in all facets of human existence and are expressed in pairs of binary opposites, including the soul and the body (177). For Spock, he must find balance in more than just the spiritual and physical parts of himself; as a human-Vulcan hybrid, Spock also strives to find the middle-ground between his Vulcan and human heritages, and in fact in the first *Star Trek* film, Spock ceases the rituals that would have completed his control over his human emotions as a commitment to his inner peace among humans (Blair, 296). Spock chooses to embrace his humanity, but he never disregards his Vulcan spirituality, which is seen in

the two sequels to the first film: *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* and *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*. The third film spotlights the idea of Vulcan spirituality and the resurrection of Spock after his death. Tuvok presents himself as a completely balanced being: having participated in many rituals, including the Kolinar, which is a ritual teamed with meditation that creates absolute control over emotions and irrationality, Tuvok appears to hold himself to the strict Vulcan practices while also integrating himself within human ideals of bravery and compassion. T'Pol shows the most emotion outwardly after being exposed to an element that permanently destroyed part of her mental capability to control her emotions. She eventually learns how to live with the damage and her emotions while also following the teachings of Vulcan logic, especially after the discovery of the Kir'shara and Surak's original interpretations of logic. T'Pol represents the most balanced Vulcan that the humans of *Star Trek* come in contact with. As a young woman, T'Pol helps discover the Kir'shara, which "contains Surak's original writings, it's the only surviving record of his true teachings" ("Kir'shara" 4:20). T'Pol upholds all Vulcan rituals and even oversees the marriage rituals of others. Just as the Kir'shara has an "enormous impact on [...] all of Vulcan" (4:27), Vulcans would have an enormous impact on the *Star Trek* universe. Without their ideas of spirituality and sex being connected and part of each other, *Star Trek* would have only been able to access the idea that the body and the soul can only be seen separately as it appears in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* just from the appearance of two doctors, one of the body and one of the mind. The human soul is connected intimately with the body as Kraemer, Cassidy and Schwartz suggest that the "body and the mind work, suffer, and display symptoms of distress together" (102) and there can be no logical split between them. Through the influence of their spirituality and sexual practices, Vulcans find their place within the universe stable as if humanity cannot exist without their presence.

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**THE OPPRESSIVE NATURE OF RELIGION-BASED
INFERIORITY COMPLEXES IN *BOARDWALK EMPIRE*
AND *THE HANDMAID'S TALE***

RACHEL BARTLETT

The HBO series *Boardwalk Empire* explores the effects of prohibition laws in Atlantic City existing across the United States in the early nineteen twenties. Nelson Van Alden, the show's main prohibition agent, is sent to Atlantic City to monitor the criminal activity surrounding prohibition and attempts to protect the city from the sins of alcohol. Since Van Alden's intense Christian beliefs are immersed within all aspects of his life, he tries to save individuals through his extremely religious morals in both his work and social interactions. Due to a sense of spiritual superiority, Van Alden is able to face adversaries and criminals with an intimidating force, despite the professional shortcomings that often occur from Van Alden's transfer to the city. Through his enlarged sense of spiritual advantage, the women in Van Alden's life are compartmentalized into sexually and socially oppressive statures. Similarly, Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* shows the Commander serving as a powerful figure, maintaining control over the novel's totalitarian theocracy through his religious power. The Commander also bases his actions on the religious advantage that he possesses over the rest of society, safely partaking in illegal activities behind the comfort of his political position. By exercising their religion-based inferiority complexes, the sinful behavior of Van Alden and the Commander is justified, serving as a way to spiritually purge the females in which their power oppresses.

During the early nineteen twenties, Atlantic City served as one of the main areas of the United States in which the laws surrounding prohibition were not adequately put into practice. *Boardwalk Empire* explores Atlantic City's rise in popularity during prohibition due to the loose law enforcement existing within

the area. Based on the life and true events surrounding Atlantic City's Enoch "Nucky" Johnson, a racketeer who acted as a prominent force through holding various political positions, *Boardwalk Empire's* Nucky Thompson is presented as a man who exercises his political power to maintain wealth and control. Since the show begins as prohibition laws are first being put into action, the criminal activity surrounding the distribution of alcohol is exponentially growing, placing Nucky Thompson and his affiliates at the forefront of the illegal trade.

Within Atlantic City's system of the indiscreet transportation and distribution of alcohol, Nelson Van Alden is transferred to aid in the control of prohibition laws. Van Alden, who is the senior agent with the Bureau of Prohibition, is a man who holds great authority within his profession. Van Alden is transferred to primarily target the activity of Nucky Thompson and the men working for him. Since the political powers of Atlantic City and the racketeering are so heavily intertwined, Van Alden is tackling both the illegal distribution of alcohol and the city's government.

However, Van Alden's failures in attempting to detain Thompson and his crew are more common than any professional successes for him within Atlantic City. The faults Van Alden faces in catching the criminals are only emphasized by co-workers. The pressure to do the job correctly becomes heavier for Van Alden because his intentions are to do well, which is suggested by Michael Shannon (who portrays Van Alden on the show) on *Fresh Air with Terry Gross*: "I do believe he ultimately has good intentions, and he wants to do the right thing — and he goes to Atlantic City believing that he can do some good in the world [...] [But] he also is surrounded by people thwarting him at every turn." Since Van Alden's profession as a prohibition agent allows him to legally enforce morality, the goal to do well through catching the racketeers in the midst of prohibition becomes stronger through Van Alden's religious beliefs. Van Alden is portrayed as a man of God's word, incorporating Christian ideology into every day conversations and actions. If Van Alden can eliminate the source of the crime, he can simultaneously erase the sin from the city. In erasing

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the sin, Van Alden would further support the idea of his spiritual superiority, which would continue the entitlement he feels within the social and political atmosphere of Atlantic City.

Also showing religious power, Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* explores the Republic of Gilead, a totalitarian theocracy in which all lives are governed, replacing the previously existing United State of America. The totalitarian theocracy of Gilead incorporates strict religious codes integrated within a Caucasian, patriarchal leadership to revive decaying morals within the previous incarnation of society. Atwood models the dystopian environment from the founding fathers of America and the concept of what would happen if the Puritanical ideas were to evolve when placed in the wrong hands:

Margaret Atwood conceived the Republic of Gilead in *The Handmaid's Tale* as one logical outcome of what she termed the 'strict theocracy' of the 'fundamentalist government' of the United States' Puritan founding fathers. Her Gileadean government maintains its power by means of surveillance, suppression of information, 're-education' centres, and totalitarian violence. Its major national issue, sterility consequent on nuclear and chemical pollution, it addresses through sexual surrogacy, turning its few fertile women into 'Handmaids' to its highest-level Commanders and their wives, using as justification the biblical story in which the barren Rachel directs her husband Jacob to 'go in unto' her servant Billah: and she shall bear upon my knees, that I also may have children by her. (Neuman 857)

In modeling the totalitarian theocracy from the Puritanical ideology of the founding fathers, Atwood places an emphasis on traditional views of hetero-normative relationships. By borrowing from the story of Jacob and Rachel from The Bible, the parallel between the system of conception within Gilead is established. In the story of Jacob and Rachel, Jacob falls in love with Rachel and exchanges seven years of labor for her hand in marriage. However,

on the night of the wedding Leah is unknowingly substituted for Rachel. Jacob finally achieves marriage with Rachel in addition to Leah; however, Rachel is unable to conceive children, whereas Leah remains fertile. Rachel, inspired through jealousy, uses her maidservant, Bilhah, as a surrogate mother for her children. Bringing Rachel's infertility and method of surrogacy to the surface sets up Gilead's mechanical system of reproduction, which uses the concept of handmaids as the primary method of reproduction.

Reflecting the role in which Bilhah fills in as a reproductive vessel for Rachel, the concept of the handmaid inside of the Republic of Gilead makes the concept of female sexuality a mere political tool. Within the Republic of Gilead, the bodies of females are perceived as mere mechanisms to produce offspring for the benefit of the theocracy. The novel's protagonist and narrator, a woman who is labeled Offred by Gilead, shows moments of reflection in examining how the dystopian society has modified her own self-perception: "We aren't concubines, geisha girls, courtesans. On the contrary [...] There is supposed to be nothing entertaining about us. [...] We are two-legged wombs, that's all; sexual vessels, ambulatory chalices" (146). In another passage, Offred continues reflecting on her position within society, but instead of using the collective "we" she focuses on the lost aspects of her own being after having become a walking womb void of all individuality: "I used to think of my body as an instrument, of pleasure, or a means of transportation, or an implement for the accomplishment of my will . . . Now the flesh arranges itself differently. I'm a cloud, congealed around a central object, the shape of a pear, which is hard and more real than I am and glows red within its translucent wrapping" (73). By stating that the object of her body is more real than she is, Offred highlights the dehumanizing aspects of living to merely serve other people with children to protect the future of the mere theocracy that is repressing her free will. The previous uses for her body, such as being an instrument of pleasure or a means of transportation, are more humanizing than the Republic of Gilead will allow because it distracts from the message of religious faith over human desire. Even the re-naming of the

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handmaids oppresses their humanity and presents them as merely existing for the benefit of the patriarchy. For example, Offred is labeled in a possessive way, with her name literally meaning “of Fred.” With the naming system of the handmaids, they become property and depersonalized. The handmaids are also stripped of their past lives, no longer containing any material possessions or reminders of their past lives except whatever memories remain within their psyche of the way things used to be.

With Bilhah being the reflection of the handmaid in Atwood’s narrative, the struggles of fertility present in Rachel’s story represent the novel’s concept of the “unwoman.” The compartmentalization of women within the novel exists through the strict categories in which women can exist within Gilead, consisting of three main categories: the post-menopausal or unmarried sterile women called Aunts who indoctrinate the handmaids, the green-dressed servant class females known as Marthas, and lowest form of compartmentalization being the unwomen (Ketterer 209). The unwomen are the females who can no longer bear children, therefore their position within society is less valuable: “Women who could not or would not belong to either of these groups and who were not hanged as subversive ‘criminals’ became Unwomen, who were usually given the job of clearing toxic wastes—itsself a death sentence” (209). The dangerous and often lethal jobs given to unwomen shows that the Republic of Gilead consider the unwomen to be disposable, serving no other purpose but to aid in the maintenance of the very environment in which they are void of freedom. By placing women in such specific and constricting roles, the theocracy eliminates the sin that is formed through sexual desire, and the women who cannot adhere to the reproductive aspects of intercourse are deemed useless in the larger constructs of society.

The role that Van Alden attempts to fill through his moral superiority in *Boardwalk Empire* mirrors the function of the Commander within the Republic of Gilead. In serving a totalitarian theocracy in search of eliminating sinful behavior, which according to the laws of Gilead is any remote belief system outside of the established

Evangelical authority, the Commander is regarded as a primary figure in maintaining the purity of the state. Through making sure society is adhering to the laws of Gilead, one of the Commander's main roles is to safeguard spiritual and sexual purity from its ostensibly corrupting influences. Since the freedoms of women become oppressed in the attempt to eliminate sexual promiscuity and enjoyment, the Commander promotes the handmaid system and merely sees the scenario as a way to further expand the purity of Gilead through a mechanical, pleasureless form of reproduction.

Van Alden's home life also reflects the complications of reproduction, giving Van Alden another chance to show his sense of religious superiority. While portrayed as living within a modest and relatively timid household, the tension between Rose, Van Alden's wife, and Van Alden becomes apparent during a table side conversation between the married couple. After the scene begins with a prayer performed by Van Alden to bless the food they are about to eat, Rose begins to cry, claiming that her menstrual cycle is a bleak reminder of her inability to conceive a child: "It means I'm not fully a woman. [...] no baby will grow inside of me." Though Van Alden tries to console her by telling her that her inability to carry a child does not make her any less of a woman, Rose proposes an idea to save money for a medical procedure she heard of from a friend that would allow her to be able to be fertile. Though Van Alden eventually states that he just wants her to be happy and that he will do whatever he can to help her get the operation, he shows an initial reluctance to help Rose seek medical attention. The reasoning behind Van Alden's reluctance to seek a medical alternative for his wife is apparent through his religious beliefs, implying that if God wanted them to have a child then He would grant Rose the ability to conceive.

If Rose were to alter herself through a procedure that could possibly allow her to have her own child, she would also be exercising her free will to stray away from the path God has designed for her. Using an outside method of fertility would alter her spiritual connection with God, and within the bond of marriage that is based around the joint spirituality of husband and wife, her

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decision equally affects the fate of Van Alden. As someone who prioritizes his relationship with God over any other relationship, Van Alden feels a sense of superiority not only directed toward the spiritual bond of his marriage, but in relation to the motives of God for denying Rose the ability to conceive. Since it is believed that God will grant whatever He sees fit for each deserving person, Van Alden attempts to gain a greater position with God through spreading spirituality to other people instead of aiding Rose's surgery financially. With Rose's infertility in mind, a stronger connection to God becomes one of Van Alden's main motives within his actions, both for the sake of his family and the people he encounters within Atlantic City.

Despite Van Alden's initial reluctance to help his wife stray away from the "unwoman" mentality existent within Atwood's novel due to his strong connection to God, he shows that he contains a savior complex in his attempts to redeem the behavior of other people. For example, one of the people Van Alden fixates on saving is Irish immigrant Margaret Schroder. Schroder, who is dating Nucky Thompson, finds herself unknowingly in the middle of the criminal activity surrounding prohibition that Van Alden is attempting to stop within Atlantic City. During encounters with Margaret Schroder, Van Alden senses a desire to be saved within her. Going off of his reading of Margaret, Van Alden plans an attempt to rescue her from the spiritual corruption she is in danger of experiencing through the people in which she chooses to associate. In the second episode of the series entitled *The Ivory Tower*, early signs of a sexualized fascination with Schroder become apparent when Van Alden visits her house to question her about the relationship she has with Nucky Thompson, stealing one of the ribbons from her hair while he is speaking with her. In a later scene, Van Alden is seen in his room, taking the ribbon from his desk and deeply inhaling it. The privacy in which Van Alden fixates on Margaret's ribbon shows the sexual nature of his feelings toward her due to his need to be secretive and confined when reflecting on his feelings toward her. The ribbon signifies a physical representation of Margaret that is seemingly innocent. However, the ribbon

is also a symbol of vanity and serves as a means to improve one's appearance, therefore Van Alden is becoming consumed by the visual aspects of Margaret instead of merely focusing on pushing her spiritually towards a more honest, and what Van Alden perceives to be a more fulfilling, lifestyle.

However, once Margaret's relationship with Nucky Thompson becomes more involved, Van Alden's attempt to save her turns against him when he takes an old photograph of Margaret that he retrieved from her file to her house, telling her that he can tell the young girl in the photograph longs to be saved. When Margaret coldly rejects his offer, Van Alden's tone drastically changes: "I came here to save you, not from prosecution—but from the fires of hell that will surely await you should you fail to repent." Though Van Alden speaks in terms of religion, it is apparent that he longed to save Margaret on a personal and spiritual level, desiring for her to become a part of his life. Margaret's need for salvation also implies her sexual promiscuity, which is ironically also what Van Alden is drawn to through his fixation. In warning Margaret for participating in the very lifestyle he longs for through lusting after her, Van Alden exercises his inferiority complex by attempting to oppress her desires through imposing spiritual guilt.

Once Margaret rejects Van Alden's offer for help, he sets his sights on saving Lucy Danziger, another former mistress of Nucky Thompson. In choosing another lover of Thompson's to fixate on, Van Alden is attempting to use his heightened sense of religious superiority to save others from the man that he cannot catch in his professional life, allowing him to use his spirituality to make up for his professional shortcomings. Leading to his attempt to save Lucy, Van Alden participates in the illegal consumption of whiskey in the bar at which he and Lucy meet. Van Alden's experimentation with the sinful vices of Atlantic City persuades him to approach Lucy when he sees her across the room. After a timid attempt at flirtation, Lucy provokes Van Alden in a sexual manner, leading to intercourse. Though Lucy is the antithesis of Van Alden's lifestyle, his strong sense of faith and the belief that he exists on a higher

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religious plain allows him to proceed with the affair in a shielded way, protected from the true corruptible nature of his actions.

However, once the intercourse with Lucy is over, Van Alden is seen withdrawn in the corner of the bed, bending over and mildly convulsing. During the scene, Van Alden's self-flagellation marks are also visible on his back, showing a symbolic representation of his personal attempts to maintain purity and remove any thoughts that would compromise his relationship with God. Just as Van Alden's self-flagellation serves as a method of purging his potential sin, the sexual encounter serves as an attempt at mutual redemption. Through the affair, Van Alden can save Lucy through his own sexuality, which contains a high moral capacity. With reproduction acting as the religious foundation for sexual intercourse, Lucy can save Van Alden through her presumed ability to provide him with a child.

In a similar manner to the purging seen within Van Alden's experience, the Commander's sexual encounters with Offred are ritualistic in nature. The intercourse takes place within a religiously sanctioned setting and ritual, eliminating any romantic and lustful elements previously associated with sex. During the ritual, the Commander's wife Serena Joy is present and joined in union with Offred, allowing Serena Joy to simulate the intercourse between Offred and the Commander:

Above me, towards the head of the bed, Serena Joy is arranged, outspread. Her legs are apart, I lie between them, my head on her stomach, her pubic bone under the base of my skull, her thighs on either side of me. She is fully clothed. My arms are raised; she holds my hands, each of mine in each of hers. This is supposed to signify that we are one flesh, one being. What is really means is that she is in control of the process and thus of the product. (94)

Since women are perceived as fallen creatures because of their sexuality, they are portrayed as being saved by men through sexual intercourse. In being saved by men, women are given a purpose,

which is to reproduce for the greater good of Gilead. The ritual allows Offred to participate in the advancement of the theocracy, serving as her only method of purging herself and becoming a relevant figure in society.

However, much like Van Alden's fall into the sinful traps of Atlantic City, the Commander incorporates Offred into his illegal activity. The secret meetings between the Commander and Offred are innocent on the surface, consisting of Scrabble games and reading magazines; however, the materials which heightens the excitement of the scenario. It is through the arousal of her illegal activity with the Commander that Offred becomes more in touch with her humanity, including her sexual side. Though the activities in which Offred and the Commander participate are illegal within Gilead, the Commander's heightened sense of religious superiority through his high ranking status provides him with a sense of protection from the corrupt nature of their meetings. The Commander also feels protected from the power of the law since he is a powerful and intricate figure within the constructs of Gilead's theocracy. While the Commander feels safe in participating in illegal affairs, he is placing Offred in a sinful position by bringing her into his activity. Since Offred is a part of the oppressed, compartmentalized females, the risk involved for her to be caught is much greater, yet not as important due to her lower placement within society.

Lucy also loses her identity when Van Alden keeps her captive inside of the apartment, becoming a physical manifestation of the compartmentalization of females within Van Alden's life. No longer a showgirl or a popular figure of Atlantic City, Lucy instead becomes an anonymous face placed within her new environment to carry out the task of reproduction. In accordance to Van Alden's rules for Lucy, she must remain within the apartment until her pregnancy is over to avoid outside suspicion about her conception. The apartment becomes its own version of an incubator, creating a habitat in which Lucy becomes a lifeless vessel whose sole purpose is to provide Van Alden with a child. Paralleling the mentality of the Commander, Van Alden believes that since he is the morally superior being, Lucy should adhere to his commands. By birthing

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the child, Lucy transforms herself from a representation of sin to a presenter of purity through bringing new life into the world. By forcing her to stay inside until the birthing ritual is complete, Van Alden is continuing to purge Lucy of her promiscuity and alcohol use. In purging Lucy, Van Alden bringing her closer to redemption, and in turn, reinforces his own sense of religious superiority.

However, Van Alden's compartmentalization of the women in his life is tested when Rose and Lucy encounter each other. When Van Alden's wife becomes worried, she goes through his professional channels to obtain the location of his new apartment. Once Rose arrives at the apartment, she discovers Lucy after she has given birth to the child. When Van Alden arrives and finds the two women of his life face to face, he tells Rose that he impregnated Lucy to give her a child. Van Alden's response supports the idea of reproduction being the foundation on which marriage is based, and though he disguises his behavior as containing good intentions, he is merely excusing his affair with Lucy and his intense desire to purge her. Unlike the forced compartmentalization of women existing within *The Handmaid Tale's* theocracy, Rose utilizes her free will and escapes from Van Alden. However, with reproduction being a primary aspect in the foundation of marriage, the absence of Rose brings Van Alden closer to his relationship with God through his folly. Van Alden's infidelity eliminates the spiritual burden of sterility and offers a new beginning with his child.

While Van Alden's experience is set in the past and the Commander's set in the future, the way in which they carry their religious superiority is equally oppressive. However, The Republic of Gilead serves as a warning for what could happen when the church contains too much power over the state, which in Atwood's case is a complete theocracy that eliminates the rights of women due to the threat of their sexuality, while Van Alden offers a glimpse into the burdensome nature of the past. Both characters are portrayed as part of the moralistic downward spiral into sin; however, the nature of their relationship to God allows them to be blind to their follies as the oppressed silently observe the flaws of their power.

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II.

CONTEMPORARY
TEXTS
HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

MARGARET ATWOOD'S *THE HANDMAID'S TALE*
VS. "SONG OF SOLOMON": WHO'S HAVING
BLESSED SEX?

ANASTASIA LATSON

A popular source of dissention within the Christian community arises from the debate between the nature of sexuality within religion. The eighteenth century Moravian Church believed that sex was holy and the act of intercourse "the highest expression of spirituality" (C. Atwood 26). Though they believed in sexuality for the purpose of procreation, passion for anything besides God remained taboo. The sex organs themselves were holy because Christ and Virgin Mary were recognized as human and in every possible way male and female. Mary's reproductive organs birthed the Christ and Christ was circumcised. For the Moravians, the entire body of Christ is holy and passionate displays of devotion were embraced and even encouraged. In an effort to avoid transference of emotion from spirituality into sexuality they kept men and women separate from each other (C. Atwood 28). The Moravian belief in passionless sex between sexual partners is contradicted in the Bible, namely the "Song of Solomon." The Bible's "Song of Solomon" combines spirituality and sexuality to become one. "Song of Solomon" is a book of the Bible written by the King Solomon who was hailed as infinitely wise. He also had one thousand wives and concubines. Many believe that "Song of Solomon" was written as an expression of spiritual love or as an expression of carnal love. For some Christians, the thought of "Song of Solomon" being written for both causes uneasiness because of the belief that the flesh and the Spirit are intrinsically opposed to one another. The Bible's "Song of Solomon" is full of passion, both carnal and spiritual, but it is in this Book of the Bible that spirituality and sexuality are integrated. As Christians are deemed the "brides" of Christ, it is conceivable that this same passion exhibited in carnal

relationships is supposed to be shown towards Christ. Passion for and from God translates into passion for one's spouse. The book makes the sexual experience just as powerful and important as the spiritual experience. "Song of Solomon" celebrates passionate spirituality as a conduit to enlightened sexual experience.

Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* turns sexuality into a ritual devoid of all passion and emotion. While "Song of Solomon" seeks to liberate through sexuality, the world that Atwood creates within the text seeks to liberate from sexuality by regulating and controlling female sexuality and eradicating displays of passion in women all together. The sex act becomes ritualized and scheduled, making spiritual union impossible between partners and thus cutting off spiritual union with God. By repressing female sexuality, the nation rejects passionate spirituality in favor of controlled religion, creating a society in which women become breeders and lose basic human rights. The eradication of sexuality from the society seems to have occurred in an effort to become piously devout nation; yet, this removal creates a totalitarian nation in which women are subjugated and abused. In order to truly be a nation founded on Biblical precedent with the intention of protecting women, Gilead must first realize the sexual repression harms the nation more than it helps. "Song of Solomon" provides a model that allows the integration of spirituality and sexuality, which liberates women sexually and cultivates an atmosphere that facilitates the spiritual passion and devotion.

The founders of Gilead use the Biblical authority as an excuse to regulate sexuality; however "Song of Solomon" refutes the notion of separating spirituality from sexuality. In separating the spiritual from the sexual, Gilead only retains the religious, the rule and rituals. The act of sex turns into something purely physical and deeply demeaning, described by the narrator as "fucking" (M. Atwood 94). They follow the ritual but are unable to connect spiritually, deriving no meaning from the experience. Shirley Neuman states that Atwood conceived this world as a "strict theocracy" under the "fundamentalist government of the United States' Puritan founding fathers" (Neuman 587). Fundamental-

ism, in this context, breeds religion, not spirituality. Spirituality allows freedom, personal connection, and passion. It creates an atmosphere of deep love and deep meaning. It connects people with people and people with God. Religion, on the other hand, follows rules and laws in order to appear devout and enlightened. Religion advocates strict guidelines for being a religious person, or in the case of Gilead, a religious nation. The creation of the Gileadean handmaids is considered a religious necessity. Gilead creates handmaids using Biblical precedent of the story of Rachel and Jacob. After Rachel realizes she cannot bear children she gives him her servant Bilhah to have children by, this is used as the epigraph to the novel. In "Song of Solomon" the body is object to be worshipped and loved, but at the same time it admonishes women to wait: "Oh let me warn you, sisters [...] Don't excite love, don't stir it up, until the time is ripe – and you're ready" (The Message Bible, Song of Solomon 2.7). This admonition from the woman lover in "Song of Solomon" teaches "freedom from" and "freedom to," freedom from sexual pressure, but freedom to express desire when she feels ready. *Handmaid's Tale* refuses to allow women, especially their handmaid, an avenue to express any kind of love for their husbands or their Commanders: "Love, said Aunt Lydia with distaste. Don't let me catch you at it. No mooning and June-ing around here, girls. Wagging her finger at us. Love is not the point" (Atwood 220; emphasis in the original). The Aunts teach all the handmaids that love is of no importance, and in actuality it is not just for the purpose of bearing children; however, this repression creates a society where women are covered up and hidden away. Basic human connection gets cut off and creates callousness in those who live in the society.

In an instance where Atwood's main character, a Handmaid named Offred, interacts with a Guardian she allows him to look at her face and she dreams about touching his cheek: "It's an event, a small defiance of rule, so small as to be undetectable, but such moments are the rewards I hold out for myself" (M. Atwood 21). The female lover in "Song of Solomon" obsesses over the sensation of touching and being touched: "You'd drink my wine and kiss my

cheeks” (The Message Bible, Song of Solomon 8.1-2), but Offred’s disconnection from the world of sensuality creates a strong desire for touch and she states: “I hunger to commit the act of touch” (M. Atwood 11). The act touching creates a connection between the toucher and the touched allowing a physical and emotional reaction. This small connection can awaken passions that Gileadean society want to avoid. The purpose of handmaids is for procreation and not physical pleasure. This thinking is technically supposed to leave the marriage of the Commander’s intact but passion and love is absent from all “legal” relationships. When Offred first comes to live with the Commander and his wife, Serena Joy, Serena Joy confronts Offred about the Commander saying: “As for my husband... [H]e’s just that. My husband. I want that to be perfectly clear. Till death do us part. It’s final” (M. Atwood 16). What Serena Joy leaves out from this is any mention of love or affection, her mini rant claims possession but not love. The reader learns that before the regime change Serena Joy possessed religious power as a televangelist, but in the new world order she possesses that power given to her by her husband. The totalitarianism of the anti-female sexuality/pro-female subjugation happens when a society based on Biblical principles begins to forget that “God is love” (The Message, 1 John 4.8).

The New International Version Bible gives another reading of 1John 4:8 stating: “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love,” as the Aunts telling the handmaids to forget love, they tell them to forget God. During Offred’s stay in the Red Center one of the other handmaids Janine begins to get carried away as they are praying and Offred describes it as “[t]he ecstasy of abasement. Some of them would moan and cry” (M. Atwood 194). The Aunts even put stop to this display of emotion and passion, which seems to be just a way to express any kind of passion for the handmaids. The Ceremony centering on the impregnation of the handmaids has the potential for extreme eroticism, but the nature of the handmaids removes all sensuality for the sex act. The Ceremony requires that Offred lay between the legs of Serena Joy and the two hold hands, while the Commander assumes the

position above her. Each of them is fully clothed touching only where necessary. No words are spoken between any of them, and as soon as the Commander achieves his release he leaves. The fact that three people partake in this ritual makes the experience cheap, and the fact that everyone is clothed gives the feeling of something unnatural and wrong taking place. The clothing also creates a physical distance from one another, making the whole Ceremony sacrilegious. The love between the man and woman in "Song of Solomon" plays out between those two, but stands as a model for others to follow. Gileadean society ignores Song of Solomon altogether. In order to gain some type of feeling for Offred and create something in her, the Commander summons her to his office late at night for a game of scrabble. The game of Scrabble is illicit for two reasons, the first being that a clandestine meeting between the Commander and Offred is strictly against the rules setup to protect the rights of Wives as wives. The second reason being that the game of scrabble is forbidden to women who are not allowed to read. By meeting late at night in the Commanders office, which is closed and close he tries to create an air of intimacy, which fails completely as Offred realizes: "This too is a construction" (M. Atwood 140). The Commander tries to force an intimacy that can only be cultivated in an atmosphere of love. Offred makes a connection with the tiles of the game calling them "voluptuous" (M. Atwood 139) and describing them with words of feeling. Creating words allows her to touch and feel, the very thing she is not allowed. These meeting breed a false sense of intimacy for the Commander, and during a Ceremony he reaches to touch Offred's face. She turns away from him rejecting any kind of connection with him. The Gileadean leadership strives to emulate Christian society yet they ignore the fundamental principle of Christian foundation which is love. If Gilead is based off the Puritan founding fathers as Neuman claims Puritans along with contemporary Christians still miss the mark in dealing with God and sexuality.

In Christian culture debate rages over the proper light in which to view sexuality in connection with the church. Gilead seeks to end the argument by controlling and/or eradicating sexuality in

women and by doing so create a religion devoid of passion. In his paper “Religion and Sexuality: The Perversion of a Natural Marriage,” David Leeming states that, “there is a sense of awe and mystery associated with both [sexual and spiritual] experiences and certain rituals that contribute to *passion* and, when things go well, to *ecstasy* in a union that affects us physically, emotionally, and psychologically” (Leeming 102; emphasis in the original); this sentiment works perfectly with Gilead. The Ceremony is a ritual but lacks passion, ecstasy, or union, but the ritual itself leaves lasting traumatic affects on both Serena Joy and Offred. The women leave the ritual wanting, incomplete, and degraded. The purpose of the ritual even fails as Offred continually fails to conceive, thus the sexual and religious experience are fruitless. In the novel after a couple of visits to the Commander’s office at night, he sneaks her out of the house to a brothel called Jezebel’s. The Commander justifies this by saying that men need variety as it is such that nature intended, yet the pointlessness off the prostitution house is evident in that all the working women are made infertile. By taking Offred there her Commander further degrades her by making her dress up a prostitute and then having sex with her in one of the rooms. Offred’s position as a Handmaid is an honor, but the Commander inadvertently lets her know that she is no more than a glorified prostitute. Serena Joy further treats Offred as a prostitute by setting her up with Nick, the chauffeur, in order to bear a child, but this plan backfires and grows desire and feeling between Nick and Offred. Offred retells her first meeting with Nick three separate times in an effort to convey the emotion reborn inside of her each ends in some type of sensual expression:

His mouth is on me, his hands, I can’t wait and he’s moving, already, love, it’s been so long, I’m alive in my skin, again, arms around him, falling. . . .There wasn’t any thunder, I added that in. To cover up the sounds, which I am ashamed of making. . . I would like to be without shame. I would like to be shameless. (M. Atwood 261, 263)

Each of these ending implies a passionate union had taken place in Nick's garage apartment. She touches and is touched and experiences sensations not felt in years. That "love" she receives from Nick becomes addictive and Offred goes back even when Serena Joy does not set the meeting. This blatant disregard for the rules shows the desperation that the repression of sexuality causes, not just in the handmaids but the Commanders and Wives as well. Leeming states in his paper that sexuality within religion gets a bad name when females became subjugated to male hegemonic rule (Leeming 104), this statement is seen as true in context with the *Handmaid's Tale*. Little by little women start to lose rights as basic human beings, first by taking control of women's money and then firing women. Once the changes started no one protested enough to make themselves heard. Taking away these basic rights with no protest or putting down protests, allowed Gileadean leadership to take over and subjugate women and reduce them to breeders. Outlets for bottled passion and desire in the handmaids are released in a controlled environment where they are watched by Aunts or Wives, but this controlled releasing of passion is not sexual in nature but violent, making the sex act and violence closely related.

One reason Gilead comes into power is in the effort to protect women from violence, especially sexual violence. Women were cautioned to be fearful of things that could lurk in the dark, mainly men with uncontrolled passions, this belief in passionate sex as violent carries over into the new regime. The only release of passion for the handmaids comes from Birth Days and Women's Salvages. For Birth Days, the handmaids converge on the house of the Handmaid giving birth, they sit in the room panting and chanting partaking in the excitement. The closeness of the room, the union with other handmaids and the ability to make some kind of connection and release pinned up passion with the release and birth of the handmaid's child. The last Woman's Salvage Offred describes in the novel allows the handmaids to release passion in a less peaceful and fruitful way than the Birth Day. The Particucution the handmaids take part in allows the handmaids to brutally beat a man to death who is accused and found guilty of raping a

handmaid (M. Atwood 279). When a Guardian brings the man to the center of the gathered handmaid and Aunt Lydia explains his crime, the handmaids rush forward and begin beating him to death: “[T]here are sounds, gasps, a low noise like growling, yells, and the red bodies tumble forward” (M. Atwood 280). Though the ex-Guardian committed no crime against them the handmaids take the opportunity to release penned up passion with a burst of grunts, yells, moans, and deep breathing leaving them spent and gasping for breath. Offred does not feel the need to participate because of her sexual relationship with Nick; however, the death does make her hungry and she wants to make love, just to make sure she is still alive. The act of making love animates the body with feeling and movement while the handmaids are usually stifled and used. Birth Days and Particutions allow the handmaids the animation they usually lack. This controlled release of animation makes sure that the handmaids keep their emotions and actions in check, and if the handmaids cannot the Eyes of Gilead do.

The Eyes of Gilead enforce Biblical laws the handmaids, Commanders, and Wives must follow, but these laws are mainly for the handmaids as they are used and abused by the society under Biblical authority. Gilead prefaces all they do with the Biblical verse supporting their actions in an effort to keep the handmaids and the women in line. Before the start of the Particution, Aunt Lydia references Deuteronomy 22:23-29, which legitimizes the killing of the man, and before each Ceremony citing Genesis 30: 1-3. The use of Biblical precedent should create the image of a perfect society, but it shows the ridiculous nature of the strict fundamentalist Gileadeans. They blatantly reject and skip passages that condemn their practices and focus solely on the Old Testament, but even in that they fail to follow its mandates. Just like people in today's society, those in Gilead ignore the “Song of Solomon.” Where the woman lover in “Song of Solomon” proclaims, “I am all he wants. I'm all the world to him” (The Message Bible, Song of Solomon 7.10). The same verse in the New King James version read, “his desire *is* towards me” (emphasis in the original). These two verses advocates one woman to one man, by Gilead takes it upon

themselves to acquire two women for one man. The love between these lovers abound they revel in one another, but there is no love between anyone in Atwood's novel. Repression of female desire and female power creates a world where emotion does not exist and true Christian values get lost in the formality of religion and ritual. In trying to follow the Bible the society ignores parts of the Bible advocating love and female passion focusing instead on pain and punishment. Instead of using the Bible to protect women, they use the Bible as an excuse to abuse them. In order to truly protect the women, those in charge of shaping Gilead needed to turn the "Song of Solomon" as a guide on how men are to treat women and how women are to men. The lovers in "Song of Solomon" hunger for no one but each other the woman proclaims "I *am* my beloveds" (NKJV "Song of Solomon" 7.10) and the man praises her body: "The curves of your thighs are like jewels, The work of the hands of a skillful workman. Your navel *is* a blended rounded goblet; It lacks no blended beverage" (NKJV "Song of Solomon" 7. 1-2 emphasis in the original). The women of Gilead, namely the Handmaids, are not in control of their bodies as the Woman in "Song of Solomon," and the men of Gilead are not allowed to enjoy the body of a woman outside of the women at Jezebel's. This Book of the Bible frees man and woman to express carnal love for each other without feelings of guilt and places each of them on equal footing. Love for one another causes the lovers to respect, protect, and remain faithful to one another, not guns and laws. Offred risks her life to meet with Nick because of the pleasure she finds in her relationship with him her words mimic the words of the woman lover in "Song of Solomon": "I want to see what can be seen, of [Nick], take him in, memorize him, save him up so I can live on the image, later: the line of his body, the texture of his flesh, the glisten of sweat on his pelt" (M. Atwood 269). Offred enjoys Nick as the woman lover enjoys her male lover. It is this type of love and passion that bolsters faith and banishes religion.

In the world Atwood creates, religion replaces faith just as ritual replaces sexuality. With the eradication of sexuality and sensuality a relationship with God suffers for true Christians. Rules and regu-

lations replace faith. In the Red Center Aunt Lydia stifles Janine's expression of spiritual ecstasy. In David Carr's book *The Erotic Word: Sexuality, Spiritual, and the Bible* he states that, [w]hen the Bible is used [...] to shut down sexuality [...] spirituality is shut down as well" (Carr 3), and Atwood's novel proves this very point. The personal disconnection leads to a spiritual disconnection. Spiritual expression leads to physical ecstasy and is completely unpredictable. By regulating when spiritual experiences take place and controlling the atmosphere, Gileadean leadership makes Salvagings predictable and leaves no room for an element of uncontrolled passionate expression. The elimination of words such as "love," "desire," and "union" (Leeming 102) it eliminates sexuality and spirituality as they both require the same language to effectively convey emotions. Repressing sexuality represses truly connecting with God as any intimate union requires both parties to be completely open and "naked" before one another. What makes Offred and Nick's relationship so erotic is the element of nakedness. The ability to see and touch every part of each other allows them to connect on a level that the Ceremony does not allow for Offred and the Commander. Praise and appreciation for one another comes in here where the Commander lacks even the slightest sense of caring beyond his duty. This tug of war between sexuality and spirituality leaves the reader in emotional limbo as the story does not end with a clear resolution, many assumed that Offred escaped Gilead because her memoir is read and gone through, but Atwood does not really allow the reader to believe this. The real tragedy in Atwood's novel is the realization that fiction can become actuality. Female sexuality seems more widely accepted, however attacks against women are prevalent in the United State and outside of the United States. It is only by embracing female sexuality that society protects women themselves.

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NAUGHTY NATIVES: HOW EUROPEAN EXPLORATION INFLUENCED MODERN REPRESENTATIONS OF ABORIGINAL SEXUALITY

AMANDA SHOEMAKE

In the introduction to his collection of short stories and essays entitled *Me Sexy*, author Drew Hayden Taylor discusses the shifts in perception regarding Native American sexuality—or rather, First Nation sexuality—and the “dominant culture’s” treatment and misunderstanding of that sexuality. According to Taylor, the dominant culture has “a different frame of reference” when it comes to what is sexy and even more specifically *who* is sexy (Taylor 2). *Me Sexy* offers readers a chance to see modern representations of Native sexuality written by modern Natives. Taylor argues that his people understood their own sexuality “since that fabled age known as Time Immemorial” and it is only recently that the First Nation’s focus has been altered by outside sources—i.e., pop culture representations of Natives, news media coverage of sexual abuse in reservation schools, and perhaps most significantly and primarily the appearance of European ideologies regarding sex and pleasure that indoctrinated the native people to resist their inherent sexual temptations or pleasures (2). Modern representations of Native sexuality—Native meaning those that would be considered members of the “First World” Nations—have been inundated with imagery that is simultaneously digressive and progressive. Both non-Native and Native perspectives regarding the body as being inherently sexual and normative appear in early American and modern literature. Most literature deals directly with the body as a connection to the creator, how the physicality of the Native body was most prominent prior to the arrival of Europeans, and how religious indoctrination—beginning with the Puritans—has influenced modern perspectives on sexual stereotypes and beliefs. Native American sex was influenced by the ap-

pearance of the Europeans and their religion which initiated both the beginning of the degradation of Aboriginal sexuality as well as the demonization of Native American spiritual practices (a lot of the Native's spiritual rituals were confused with sexual/demonic acts). *Me Sexy* offers a Native perspective on the decline of Native Sexuality as well as challenges new perceptions of Native sex and its place in pop culture.

For the most part, Colonialism destroyed Native identity and perspective in the original conceptualization of that identity—specifically regarding sex—in order to create and maintain a semblance of control. By redefining the Native space, colonizers were able to simultaneously deconstruct the Native identity—both communal and individual—as well as create a new identity that was/is completely reliant upon the dominance of their culture (specifically, their religion). Because there were literally no constraints on Native American sexuality prior to the arrival of Europeans, the deliberate removal and subsequent application of a new identity caused lasting psychological damage in how native people regard themselves. While some colonial powers chose physical extremes such as war or outright genocide, European settlers in the Americas used religious indoctrination to control the native population. Demonizing the act of sex by citing religious doctrine—the written word having considerable power over “uneducated” people—was a way for the dominating culture (white men) to oppress the sexuality and spirituality of the natives as well as a way to ensure dependency by withholding basic needs in exchange for religious salvation. For instance, in her captivity narrative *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees: A Narrative of Indian Captivity*, Sarah Wakefield describes the “Indian payment” system that was in place in June of 1861—a system that was most likely put into action very early on in the colonizing process (Wakefield 249):

In June [the Natives] usually come in for the lands which they have sold to the United States, some coming many hundreds of miles; and if the money is not ready, they expect food for themselves, procured at the expense of the Govern-

ment, as that is part of their treaty. As soon as they are paid they leave, and very few are ever seen until another year has passed away. (249)

What Wakefield fails to mention is that the United States government at the time almost never came through with their part of the contract. More often than not, the tribes that came to claim the money for which they sold their land and most likely converted for were met with empty promises—the colonial equivalent of “I’ll have the money next week, Tonto...please don’t whack my family.” This system is directly related to the way in which (specifically) Native Americans repressed their own natural or inherent beliefs and practices to the point where they became completely reliant upon the dominant culture for basic sustenance and eventually for self-identification. The repression of natural foraging habits and the overuse of traditional hunting grounds also played a huge role in the cultural dominance of aboriginals. Europeans began restricting movement for Native people almost immediately, perhaps citing that it was best to keep the “enemy” close. Colonizers restricted movement by re-drawing pre-historic tribal lines—see Africa and the effects of Imperialism because of the creation of state lines that failed to take into consideration tribal inclinations and nomadic traditions. Nomadic nations within the Aboriginal populace understood that movement was an inherent right and necessary to their survival as hunter-gatherers. Early European colonizers obviously did not or did and chose not to care. Although on the surface the most glaringly poignant examples of the effects of Imperialism have more to do with spiritual and cultural upheaval, the authors in Taylor’s collection would argue that sex was as normative as breathing for Aboriginal people and that religious indoctrination on the part of the Europeans was completely responsible.

For Makka Kleist, a native of Greenland and member of the Inuit tribe, sex was “considered a necessity of the body, as much as food and water, and hence [the people] didn’t have so many taboos or hidden agendas regarding sex” (Kleist 16). In her essay

“Pre-Christian Inuit Sexuality,” Kleist describes the traditional sexual practices of the Inuit people as being normative—something that was expected and often encouraged as a means of creating bonds between people. She describes the Inuit people as probably being “the only nation that didn’t have any intoxicants at all” and that often “after a good meal [...] they would turn off their lamps” and engage in an orgy of sorts, where a person “would sit in total darkness and either wait for someone to grab them or go hunting for a partner themselves” (15). After the “sounds of utmost physical pleasure had died out” the lights were turned back on and the evening would continue with singing and stories (16). Kleist describes Inuit sexuality as being a separate entity. An individual did not necessarily exhibit sensuousness, instead the sex stood alone as a stress reliever, a way to maintain bonds with one another—in that there were no boundaries—and perhaps most importantly sex was a way to combat the “dangers of degeneration” (16). Because sex was considered a normative act by this particular nation—and most First Nations—it could never be considered a degrading or negative thing—outside of incest, there were literally no taboos regarding sex.

So what caused the alteration of views regarding sex in the Inuit people of Greenland? Kleist argues—along with the majority of Native scholars and writers—that “Christianity did its utmost to distort sexuality for [the Inuit people]” (18). According to the Greenland Saga (*Graenlendinga Saga*), Leif Eriksson began preaching Christianity in Greenland in 1000 A.D. at the request of King Olaf Tryggvason (Smithsonian NMNH). This is over 500 years prior to Christian settlements in North America which indicates that the demonization of Aboriginal sexuality is not specifically isolated to the Americas, but is apparently a universal quality of the relationships between Christian settlers and Native peoples. For the colonizers, the physical differences between themselves and the natives that they encountered was probably the most heavily weighted point of reference for justifying the treatment of the Natives. All points of contact that were recorded by the colonizers

remarked on the nakedness of the Natives. Vicki Jaimez quotes Christopher Columbus:

The inhabitants of both sexes in this island, and in all the others which I have seen, or of which I have received information, go always naked as they were born, with the exception of some of the women, who use the covering of a leaf, or small bough, or an apron of cotton, which they prepare for that purpose...they are well-formed... (Columbus qtd. in Jaimez).

Just as Columbus focuses on the body of the native in his text, European representations of Natives in the early stages of colonization typically depict smallish, although lean, figures that seem to cower away from the stouter and more imposing figures of the colonizers:

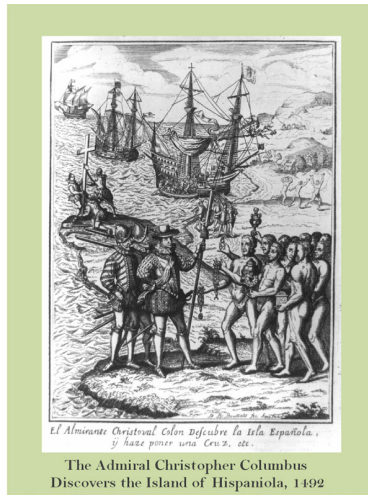


Fig. 1: Columbus Landing on Hispaniola, Dec. 6, 1492; greeted by Arawak Indians (de Bry engraving 1590).

Figure 1 depicts the first encounter between Christopher Columbus and the aboriginals on Hispaniola—referred to as the Taíno people. In the background anchored in the bay are Columbus' three famous colonizing ships the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa

Maria. The European men—excluding Columbus—are dressed in armor and have a strong, even threatening military presence. The one standing next to Columbus (who is the only, non-armored European standing in the foreground) has his hand on the weapon at his side. Three other soldiers erect a cross in the background. This particular depiction of the first encounter does not show the settlers erecting a Spanish flag. Instead, the cross is in the forefront with the flag being in the background on one of the ships—this artist certainly believed that, although one of the three G's of colonization was Glory for your country, the most important factor for Columbus and his men as colonizers was God. In this engraving, Columbus is simultaneously colonizing and baptizing the new world and its native population. The natives are bringing gifts to the conquerors. In the background, three naked Natives are running away from the ships, waving their hands in the air—perhaps they had the right idea.

Nakedness is a trait that is often considered as being un-civilized and certainly un-Christian. Of course, the European idea of nudity was a “relative concept as compared to the European notions of dress” which was often a means of class identification and social standing—i.e., wealth, power, profession, nationality, etc. (Jaimez). For Europeans, the idea of both sexes being naked meant that there was no discernible class system or social hierarchy, which would have been completely foreign to any colonizer. In addition to the lack of visual identifiers, the blatant nakedness of the natives also meant equality between genders in that both men and women were open with their sexuality—a concept that would have directly contrasted European perceptions of female sexuality. Jaimez discusses the clashing of differing sexual definitions as an “abrupt and immediate collision between two distinct perceptions of human sexuality” (Jaimez). Aboriginal people had no outside influence on their own perceptions regarding sex and eroticism. It was only after European influence and the implementation of Christianity that nakedness became inappropriate and somehow savage. Another colonizer of Columbus' era, Cortez, “used the women he received as gifts to inject Christianity into the native culture” by

playing on the anxiety of the Natives that recognized the power of the Europeans—especially the Spaniards who were very quick to resort to violence against Native peoples—and were trying to “maintain good relations” (Jaimez). The Spaniards in this instance converted sex from something that was as normative as needing air or water into a commodity. By subjugating the sexuality of the Aborigines, the Spaniards—and other colonizers like them—created a system that enabled the colonizers to establish a culturally hegemonic hierarchy with the natives (obviously) on the bottom of the totem pole (pun completely intended). The Spaniards would only be pleased and leave the natives “alone” if they received gifts, and they would only accept gifts if the Natives renounced their “heathen ways” and “false gods.” The Spanish differed greatly from the British in their means of conveying Christianity to the Aboriginal peoples they came across—in that they expressed their faith and simultaneously their sexuality “in the arena of commodities and exploitation” (Jaimez). The British tried to indoctrinate the Native American people on the “conflicting values of Puritanical virtue and courtly pomposity” (Jaimez)—meaning that they tried assimilating (at least in the beginning as means of survival) the Natives into their culture. Jaimez points out that the “sexual allurements between the British and the natives [in the instance of the marriage between Pocahontas and John Rolfe] was confined to the elites of both continents,” meaning that the privileged could cross-marry because they could afford the luxury of going back to England and getting the marriage approved (Jaimez). Jaimez argues that the most progressive of the nationalities that colonized the Americas were the French who “popularized sexuality at the level of the commoner in order to create a new race of mixed-blood people who would be easier to Christianize and govern than their native predecessors had proved to be” (Jaimez). The introduction of Sex-for-Gain to Aboriginal views must have changed their perspectives regarding their own self-worth and power in the developing relationship between the colonizers and the colonized.

Some prime examples of the ways in which Natives were viewed, specifically as sexual or deviant beings are available in women’s

captivity narratives that span almost two hundred years of colonization and history in what would become the United States. Mary Rowlandson, in her captivity narrative “The Sovereignty and Goodness of God,” describes her captors as “murderous Wretches” who “went burning and destroying” her home and village (Rowlandson 12). The description exalts the barbarous nature that was typically assigned as being an inherent part of Native American character. Regarding sex, Rowlandson makes only few references to the sexual nature of her captors (which is hard to believe considering she shared their tent so to speak on several occasions). She does, however mention the multiple partners that her “master” had:

My Master had three Squaws: living sometimes with one, and sometimes with another. One, this old Squaw at whose Wigwam I was, and with whom my Master had been those three weeks. Another was *Wettimore*, with whom I had lived and served all this while. A severe and proud Dame she was; bestowing every day in dressing her self near as much as time as any of the Gentry of the land: powdering her hair and painting her face, going with her Neck-laces, with Jewels in her ears, and bracelets upon her hands. [...] The third Squaw was a younger one, by whom he had two Papooses. (37)

Instead of directly addressing the sexual transgressions of her captors, Rowlandson instead focuses most of her attention on the physical attributes of the three women. The middle wife appears vain and contemptuous, spending a lot of her time on her personal appearance. Rowlandson does not just condemn the second wife as being vain, but simultaneously condemns members of her own cultural hegemony that spend a majority of their time on their appearances—an action that takes away from their devotion to God and their religious responsibilities. Rowlandson, in a prime example of how Europeans might have viewed Native American sinfulness, tends to group the transgressions of her captives in a way that insinuates that a Native exhibiting one sin must then also exhibit or is capable of exhibiting other sinful qualities. Her Master has three wives and essentially splits up his sexual responsibilities

depending on his mood. Because the Squaws are allowed to be sexual creatures, they are open to other transgressive acts such as vanity and jealousy. Another example would be when Rowlandson's master, "after he had had his drink, quickly came ranting into the Wigwam" where she and others were trying to negotiate the terms of her release (43). Rowlandson does remark that her Master was "the first *Indian*, I saw drunk all the while [she] was amongst them" and that he finally gave into another vice by going after one of his Squaws—in what we are mostly likely to assume a sexual manner—until he finally turns to the older of the three squaws and, "through the Lord's mercy," is satisfied and stops molesting Rowlandson and others (43). The most striking part is the insinuation that her salvation from her Master's alcoholic ravings was in fact due to her Master giving into another base and sinful activity: promiscuity. Although this particular incident certainly seems like a shift in thinking regarding Native sexuality—or at least is an acknowledgement that sexuality is also within the dominion of the divine providence of God—Rowlandson never directly tackles the "issue" of Native sexuality as being a mannerism or part of Native culture that could eventually undermine European law. Rowlandson instead concentrates on (her) personal salvation. She also supports the stereotypes regarding the inherent sinfulness of Native Americans as supported by the hegemonic power of the Europeans.

However, the shift in attitudes regarding sex and sexual practices by native peoples did not stop with the introduction of Christianity. In modern times—circa 1900's to the present—the dominant culture has began backtracking its initial judgment of native sex. In his article "Indian Love Call," Drew Hayden Taylor discusses how the dominant culture has embraced the concept of Native American sexuality as being inherent and even exotic: "But perhaps nowhere has the image of the sexual Aboriginal been so appropriated, so conjured, so manipulated but embraced, than in the uncountable number of Western/historical romance novels that populate mainstream bookstores, drugstores, airports, and used-book emporiums" (Taylor 27). Depictions of Native Americans on romance novel covers range from the brooding warrior with a

“solid aquiline nose, chiseled brow and long, flowing raven-black hair that can tell you the direction of the prairie breeze better than any windsock” to the exotic half-breed who is not accepted by his tribe or his white neighbors (28). Native sexuality is only relevant when in conjunction with white sexuality and desires. However, the way in which the desires of the women in romance novels are characterized almost exclusively follow a very strict formula in order for their desires to be “acceptable.” Taylor describes the women as almost always being “young and virginal;” they do not necessarily have to be virgins, as long as their sexual experiences were as a result of an “understandable” situation—i.e., “usually [sex] within a marriage to an impotent or abusive man, frequently white, from whom they are struggling to escape” (31). The male protagonists, on the other hand, “have been quite sexually active in prior years” and manage to adopt “holistic, respectful and tender [forms]” of love-making (31). The formulaic nature of the romance genre allows the reader feel comfortable in what could very well be—and is intended to be—an unsettling environment for the average housewife. Ironically—as if the entire romance genre was not ironic enough—the male protagonist is the savior figure. He typically is hired or asked to rescue the woman protagonist from certain doom because he is a half-breed or was raised by Indians and therefore “knows their ways.” Perhaps Taylor describes this type of fantasy as “the Stockholm Syndrome with a happy ending” (30):

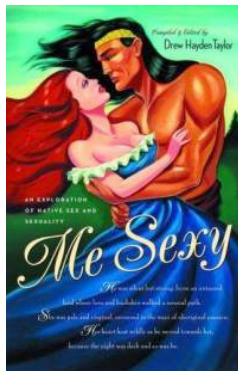


Fig. 2: Cover of *Me Sexy*

The men on the covers of these novels look like “white men with good tans in dim lighting” but are a major part in drawing white, working-class white women into one of the highest grossing subgenres of the Romance genre (28). Taylor argues that in order for the sexuality of these Natives to be accessible they must encapsulate a “distant but still embraceable culture and environment, far removed from [the reader’s] own existence” but not as far as complete submersion into another culture—that might take more than the two-hundred page average length of most romance novels (28). The “trick” of recovering sexuality—or at the very least, making it so the topic can be approached without the lingering effects of the religious indoctrination against Native sexuality—is making it accessible to the dominant culture. As stated previously, the “Natives” that are gracing the covers of Romance novels look more like really tan white guys with hair extensions than a traditional idea of “Native.” They are approachable and accepted as being “sexy” to a specific audience. The white colonizers crossed the ocean to find something that was forbidden to them in their own environments—whether it was religious freedom or gold. That need to experience the forbidden has not left the dominant culture’s need for experiencing new things. By incorporating the Native American into a pop culture phenomenon, authors of romance novels are offering their readers the chance to “experience forbidden love” (but not too forbidden, 9 out of 10 times the male “lead” is a half-breed). In fact, Taylor remarks that “in a random sampling of ten historical romances, five of the male protagonists were half-breeds” indicating that the progressiveness of the romance genre is reliant upon how far the reader is prepared to go regarding how “native” the male protagonist is described. Romance writers are not trying to erase the stereotypes between Native and non-Native relationships—at least not any further than they can make a buck. Instead, these authors—mostly middle-age white women themselves—perpetuate the concept of Native sexuality as being unapproachable to the masses. The protagonists in these particular novels (as a whole) can be considered progressive in that they are not the traditional depictions of people who are

responsible for the “kidnapping, rape and other assorted defilements” of the dominant white culture that are often considered “the order of the day” for any pop culture reference of Native Americans (23). Ironically, the romance novels are popular *because* they are about interracial sexual relationships—a topic that is still slightly taboo in everyday conversation. Very rarely do the “historical romance” novels depict a “tender love story” between two Natives. However, Taylor and his peers do not necessarily consider the “historical” romances to be damaging to established perceptions of Native sexuality:

“As a Native person, how do I feel about these books? Am I insulted? No. Do I think their portrayal of Native people is dangerous? No, no more dangerous than their portrayal of all those tall, lithe, lovely, slender, curvy women that read them with their amber/grey/green/blue eyes. Does it do [Native] culture justice? Of course not. Does it do [Natives] any harm? If anybody believes this is reality, they are more a danger to themselves than to us. (31)

Taylor does not treat the genre as yet another instance of the hegemony trying to impose certain sexual expectations or beliefs on to unsuspecting consumers. Instead, Taylor and his literary counterparts try to concentrate on the “genre’s positive influences” (31). What the genre often lacks in accuracy, for the most part “makes [Natives] out to be caring, sensitive and interesting partners, far superior to all those abusive or non-existent husbands” and, he adds, “Not to mention fabulous lovers” (31). So perhaps the Romance genre that specifically deals with Native sexuality is not necessarily another medium with which to suppress open sexuality. Perhaps, it is progressive in the sense that the Native characters in the texts are able to *be* sexual and even powerful in their sexuality without the burden of previously established perceptions of sex that would consider them heathens.

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**WOLVES, MEN, AND WEREWOLVES. OH, MY!
THE TRAPPINGS OF MASCULINE DESIRE WITHIN
RELIGION AND FAIRYTALES**

TARA PROUTY

As years progress the old legends and religious stories morph into powerful tools for modern fiction writers like Angela Carter. Many religious tales and folk lore use the image of the wolf and wolf-men to show the sexual, violent, or desiring nature of masculine desire. From Europe to America, the connection between were-wolves and religious folk lore remains present within society. Carter takes tropes forged by old religious folk lore and rituals in order to recreate the tale of the werewolf. In her stories “Company of Wolves” and “Wolf-Alice,” Carter showcases the re-occurring theme within folk lore and religious writings. The most commonly known theme of a wanting wolf or werewolf that desires someone in a violent manner and Carter uses this theme to show her male character wanting and in the werewolf story the sexual wanting; however, main stream religions and social rituals deems their sexual desire as sinful or evil. The division between acceptable desires, like careers and children, and unacceptable desires outside the normal restrains, such as marriage, creates fragmentation of men and desire into man and beast. Religion often depicts wolves as naturally violent and evil entities and man as their master or betters. In turn, fairytales and folk lore uses the violent evil wolf and fuse with men and masculine sexuality. Carter uses the werewolf motif as means to bring attention and critique on the religious influences and barriers places on masculine desires, especially sexual desire.

Stories of bloodthirsty ravenous wolves and werewolves have been around for many years. From the Celtic traditions of Ireland to the Romanian religious Christian, the stories of wolves and their human-beast hybrid come to life. In Celtic Ireland, as

Christian traditions began to blend together with Celtic beliefs, they produce interesting stories of spirituality and nature. “In a number of stories [within the Celtic tradition] a wolf kills a calf or fawn, and a saint orders the wolf” (Bratton15) to in return for the wolf’s action work under the Saint’s command. And as the Christian beliefs began to seep into the Celtic religion “When [wolves] ignored his command, [the saint] said: 'In the name of Jesus Christ, go away forthwith, and do not presume to remain any longer in the place that you are damaging’”(Bratton 15). The conflict between a wolf’s natural desire for food warps into an evil action in the eyes of the saint. Then the continuation of the newly added Christian sentiments of having power label the wolf’s natural desire to eat prey as damaging and demands it to repent for its crimes. The combinations of the two religions create tension between religious power and beast. This tension shows up often within were-wolf lore and modern day society.

Another instant of European were-wolf lore comes in the form of the Romanian rituals celebrated during the days before and after Christmas and Easter. Within this particular culture, people believe that “ Christian holidays [Easter, Christmas and New Year’s day] are likewise the focus of sexual restrictions inscribed in the church canons; that is, one must observe abstinence from sexual relations [...] Failure to do so, and the possible conception of a child will [...] bring deformity and 'animal characteristics' to the infant at birth. The victim will be cursed with 'wolf ears,' [...] or a 'wolf's head,' or will have a harelip, and generally will be 'unlucky' and even malicious” (Senn 206). This culture intertwines werewolves and Christian holidays and portray sexual intercourse outside of the constraints define but the religion as evil and creates spawns of children born of wolf-like characteristics. In Carter’s works she pulls from this tradition in “The Company of Wolves,” when the narrator at the very end exclaims “It is Christmas Day, the were-wolves birthday, the door of the winter solstice stands wide open; let them all sink through” (118). What is fascinating about his particular part of Europe comes from the fact that young

unmarried men parade around in mask of beast as a means to remind the community of the consequences of unholy sexuality.

Across the pond, the early American roots and traditions breed tales of soul eating monsters. Colonists, mostly of Protestant backgrounds, came over from Europe were pledged by these new monsters and until then only heard of wolves in fairy tales and legends. As interactions between human and wolves continued and the fear of wolves spreads, the wolves became associated with soul sucking beast or objects of spiritual treat. However, be it Christianity or Pagan, a story of wolves always expresses a wolves' wanting or desiring; food, sex, or violence. The wolves, because of these old tales and years of fear for the creatures, have morphs into man-wolf hybrids. And just like the European Celtics and Christians, early Americans "colonists may not have believed that wolves would attack them, they believed that the animals threatened their spiritual wellbeing. Wolves were considered capable of murdering a person's soul. [...] [T]he New Testament's teaching [said] wolves were evil, they identified with the sheep and lambs that were the wolves' Biblical prey" (Fogleman 66). This concept takes the previous works of European religious tales of wolves and further integrates them into the evil monsters that consume harmless livestock. This same article explains that "John Winthrop described himself as "a poor shepherd[...]among the small flock of sheep I daily fold in this distant part of the wilderness...to secure them from the wild rapacious quadrupeds of the forest"(66) and the sexual language continues to seep into the religious definition of wolves as ravenous or rapacious creatures.

The religious telling of ravenous wolves and Christianity's need to control the animalistic urges of wolves creeps its ways through the times and finds itself a big part of modern literature like Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*. During an interview the reporter asked her about mythology in her writing and Carter replies with "there is something classy about invoking myth, it implies you've got a college education, people like to spot myths, it makes them feel good. [...] I *am* interested in the way people make sense, or try to make

Tara Prouty

sense, of their experience and mythology is part of that” (Carter). Also, in a earlier interview with Anna Katsaos, Carter states that

[t]he stories in *The Bloody Chamber* are very firmly grounded in the Indo-European popular traditions. [...] There’s this long history in Europe of taking elements from oral traditions and making them into very elaborate literary conventions, but all the elements in her story [*The Bloody Chamber*] are very lush. (Carter 14)

In her werewolf stories, they reflect her need to use myths and traditions in order to invoke a reaction from her audience. She pulls from motifs and themes already present in religious traditions. These traditions stories that began as oral tales spoken by the campfire still remain present within contemporary works of literature and so do the ideas and morals.

One of those wolf stories, “The Company of Wolves” reflects many of the themes and tropes religious text and lore express, such as wolves’ being inherently evil. At the beginning of the story introduces the reader to the wolves, not werewolves, it goes into explicate detail of the wolf’s characteristic:

The wolf is carnivore incarnate and he’s cunning as he is ferocious; once he’s had a taste of flesh then nothing else will do. At night, the eyes of wolves shine like candle flames, yellowish, reddish, but that is because the pupils of their eyes fatten on darkness and catch the light from you lantern to flash it back to you—red for danger; if a wolf’s eyes reflect only moonlight, then they gleam a cold and unnatural green, a mineral, a piercing sequins stitch suddenly on the black thickets. (110)

In the stories opening, the reader can see bits and pieces of the religious tropes mention in the Romanian rituals of the wolf and their dangers to society within Carter’s description of the wolf physical features. In the Romanian rituals young unmarried men would go “dancing with the dramatized bartering [and] disenchantment

from the evil eye [referring to the evil eyes of wolves]” (Senn 206) in the same way that this introduction warns of the enchanting eyes of the wolf and the dangers it holds. The taste of flesh, yellowish red eyes that feast of darkness, each image invokes hunger or eating. Using these images the novel reaffirms that wolves natural desire to hunt and prey as dangerous. The eyes of the wolf transform into gateways to revealing the evil of wolves and like the Celtic-Christian story about the misbehaving wolf, the text label the wolf evil simply because wolves are carnivores incarnate. This with the combination of the stating wolves as carnivore incarnate castes the wolf, a male do to the use of the male pronoun, as an evil entity. All of these traits and illustrations of the wolf’s physical character relate back to the wolf as being inherently evil and vicious. Carter uses the tropes present within religion and folk lore to make up her wolf in order for the audience to immediately associate anything male and beast like as dangerous and looking for something (i.e. Blood or sex) to satisfy its desire.

“The Company of Wolves” uses characteristics, particularly the eyes, of the wolf to show the wolves natural desires as evil and the same theme exists within the male werewolf in her other story. In “Wolf-Alice,” she introduces another pair of hellish eyes to the audience only this time the eyes belong to a werewolf. She describes them as “those huge, inconsolable, rapacious eyes of his are eaten up by swollen, gleaning pupils. His eyes see only appetite. These eyes open to devour the world in which he sees, nowhere, a reflection of himself” (121). This description eerily echoes the first stories introduction with the wolf; however, in this introduction, a werewolf becomes the subject as oppose to the male wolf. His eyes create the same expectation for the audience as the eyes from the previous story. The characteristics invoke fear in the audience and immediate dislike. The text plays on those negative emotions to further trap the masculine beast and man further within the constraints given to masculine desire by religion. Religious constraints and definitions of men and their masculinity create a stereotype for men and force them into those roles and in some studies they have found a direct link between masculine

acts of violence and religion. In Berkel's article *Domestic Violence Attributes* reveals conduct studies that proves male violence links to religious beliefs when:

Relationships among gender role attitudes, religious orthodoxy, and beliefs about forced marital intercourse and found that those who held traditional gender role attitudes [...] more likely to endorse the use of forced marital intercourse than those with egalitarian gender role attitudes or those who did not report religious orthodoxy. (121)

Religion becomes a cage for men that place controls over their natural desires and want into a small box that creates more violence than it prevents. The hunter and werewolf set up the binaries in men and the same binary shows up in "Wolf-Alice" with the Duke's description. Carter uses the werewolf's title, the Duke, and his physical description as a way of fracturing masculine desire. In this story, Carter mentions an Iberian butcher shop as she illustrates the Duke's home surroundings and in Iberian religious tradition. The eldest child or head of the family, the Duke, take ownership over the younger child and becomes a godparent to the child: Lest he or she be doomed to "run the fate," that is, be a "werewolf" or "witch," "and be, moreover, prone to epileptic fits. Overall, then, we see that a special mode of baptism [...] for the choice of godparents among kin and social peers would apply for [...] children, who would be given unusual godparents: strangers or siblings" (Vaz da Silva 336-37).

And in the story, the story the Duke obtains responsibility over her and fails to fulfill his social duty. Applying this religious tradition to the story places the Duke in the position of Alice's godparent and as he "lives in a gloomy mansion, alone but for this child who has as little in common with" (120) her as he does with the rest of the society shows his abounding religious duty for his own hungry desires. The story explains that he is more concern for "the moon, the governess of transformation and overseer of somnambulist, pok[ing] an imperative finger through [...] and strik[ing] his face"

(120). The spiritual force of the moon forces upon him a transformation, i.e. werewolf, and “He is cast in the role of corpse-eater, the body-snatcher who invades the last privacy of the dead” (121) bring in the theme separation of hunger from the male identity once more. And as the story continues his hunger for dead bodies transfer to living when “the moon [...] shinning into the kitchen when she woke to feel the tickle between her thighs and it seemed to her that a wolf who, perhaps, was fond of her, as wolves were [...] must have nibbled her cunt” (122). The moon, wolf, and sexual assault shows how the wolves hunger extends past the mere tasting of flesh as food and trickles into sexual hunger. Thusly, takes the Duke’s hunger for physical pleasure and literally transform it into a entity of immorality. Because he ignored the duties of society and religious tradition his desires become fracture into man and beast. The story does not end at his fractured identity, the story furthers the implication of his desires being evil comes in how the victims of his hunger “brought a ten-gallon tub of holy water [...] blessed by the Archbishop himself, to drown the Duke” (125). This scene shows how religious institutions view the fracture man as evil and must be destroy. The story continues to show the reoccurring themes of men, rather werewolves, desire and hunger as evil when they step outside constrains set in place by spiritual authority.

As religion continues to cage and control masculine desire, Carter’s story “The Company of Wolves” shows the effect of religious control. Within this short story, there are a number of mini stories, such as the story of the hunter and his battle with the wolf. The novel continues to caste the image of the wolf as evil and in the hunter’s story the wolf’s actions set up to create an immediately dislike for the wolf:

This wolf had massacred the sheep and goats; eaten up a mad old man who used to live by himself [...] and sing to Jesus all day; pounced of a girl looking after sheep, but she made such a commotion that men came with rifles and scared him away [...] So this hunter dug a pit [...] and a wolf came slinking out of the forest, a big one, a heavy one, he weighed as much

as a grown man and [...] tumbles into the pit [the hunter then killed it and cut off its paw.] And then no wolf at all lay in front of the hunter but the bloody trunk of a man, headless, footless, dying, dead. (111)

Within this mini story the audience can see the constraints of religion in the massacring of livestock, old men and pouncing on a sheep watching girl. Many critics view this scene and others like it as “understand [female] in this scene as constrained by patriarchal ideologies of sex and violence and thus passively accepting of rape” (Lau 86) and the rapist coming in the form of the pouncing wolf. Now, the image of the sheep within religion refers to the followers of Jesus and couple with the pouncing on the girls implies more than just the desire to kill or eat. Both with the lamb and the girl imply violent rape or the threat of rape. Both the religious tale and the fairy tale use the wolf’s hunger as representing a metaphor of rape. The three images all come together to implicate the wolves as violent and threatening the spirituality of the community. But then the character of the hunter comes into the picture. He is armed with the rifles, a common trope of masculine sexual and dominating power, and kills the wolf revealing it to be a werewolf. The hunter gives the audience a proper definition of masculine power as the hunter, the protector. His power comes from his ability to overpower and trap the violent wolf man; thus, killing the, suppose, evil of the masculine desire.

The binary continues once again as the main plot of “The Company of Wolves” begins as the story uses the hunter-wolf motif set up earlier in the plot. Once the text finishes with the story of the woman and her husbands, the tale continues on into the familiar tale of little red riding hood that most readers know. This scene introduces the story’s main male character and he:

A very handsome young one, in the green coat and wide-awake hat of a hunter, laden with carcasses of game birds. [...] He laughed with a flash of white teeth when he saw her

[...] She had never seen such a fine fellow before. [...] He told her his rifle would protect them. (114)

The leading lady in this passage openly flirts with him and due to his characteristic the behavior between the two is socially acceptable. This description of a nice hunter carrying a rifle reflects back to the earlier mini story with the hunter. Carter wants the audience to believe this man to be the valiant hunter who defends the damsel for the big bad wolf. The man, at this moment, embodies all the good, marital qualities in a man. Every think about his image, from the white teeth to the idea of the protector, manipulates readers into placing this man on a pedestal for all men to abide by. Doing so falls into the common tropes of men as protectors and the stereotypes that go along with the title. The audience places expectations on him as a hero and nothing in his imagery is overtly sexual.

The ideal man; however, as the reader continue on in the story they learn the handsome man has a darker side. As the young woman and the suppose hunter part ways the reader's get a revealing look into the other side of the man's descriptions. At the grandmother's house the man "off with his disguise [...] his matted hair streams down his face [...] he strips off his shirt. His skin is the color and texture of vellum [and] his nipples are ripe and dark as poison fruit." At this point the narration has already made him ooze with sexuality and then goes a step further when he "strips off his trousers and she can see how hairy his legs are. His genitals, huge. [And was the] last thing the old lady saw" (116). A number of things happen in this description of his lustful half. One, whereas the first image embodies everything good in man, now he embodies everything sexual in man. The tale does by focusing closely on his physical assets like his skin, nipples, and genitals embellishing them in ways that obviously invoke sexuality in the male form. This passage also furthers the connection between the sexual desire of wolves and men as evil. The hairy legs, the matted hair covered in lice all connects the hyper-sexualized man to the wolf. Doing so connects his sexuality to the evils ideas and themes found in wolf folklore. Margaret Denike explains in her essay on *Preliminary Remarks on*

Genealogical Method: Challenges for Writing Counter-Histories about how “Demonological treatises issued by church and crown or state of officials typically sexualize, demonize, and criminalize her as the incarnation of evil [...] “enemy of God” who wreaked havoc on His greatest glory: man” (11) but in this case the religious depiction of the evil wolves creates the same demonization of the male figure. The story “The Company of wolves” showcases the demonization of men’s natural sexual nature through the physical fracturing of his body from a hunter to a beast.

Both “The Company of Wolves” and “Wolf-Alice” depicts the wolves, men, and werewolves as constantly redefine in the works of literature and religion. Wolves become inherently evil beasts that possess an unquenchable hunger, men’s sexual demonize by religion, and werewolves blend the two and transform into a demonic entity with an unquenchable sexual appetite for women. Carter, a well-known feminist writer, creates within her werewolf fairytales a cage for masculine desire. From Celts to Christians there are folklore and rituals that all claim men and male animals as creature of evil and sex. She, knowingly or unknowingly, uses religious tales and folklore that empower woman, but at the same time continues the tradition of demonizing male sexuality and keep the tradition of fracturing men and sexual desire outside “normal marital” practice alive. One feminist critic claims that “Carter writes erotic possibility—not simply a prescription for a new erotic, a new definition, but rather a space where both women and men can express their animal drives, can live their bestial natures, can embrace their erotic selves in a “world of absolute sexual license for all the genders” but the fact that in both the stories men remain fracture in their sexuality argues against Lau. Yes, Carter writes of the animalistic erotica and empowerment of the female desire reveals itself clearly; however, the men in the story cannot make that same claim to sexual desire. The female characters remain physically and mentally whole throughout both narrations, whereas the men fracture into wolf and man.

The characteristics of men usually define as dominant, violent, sexual, and powerful. All these descriptions show men as having

all the power, but those traits become bars on the cages of their prison. Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* in her male werewolves show the bonds place on men and their desires by these suppose empowering characteristics. The two retelling of werewolf folklore transforms men's sexual nature, no sanction by religious and social norms, into blood-thirsty wolves. Empowered with the old European lore and old campfire stories of wolves, Carter manages to fall into the stereotypes for men found within those old stories and feed into the oppressive nature of religious fear of masculine sexual desire. But other writers fall into the trap of separating men from their sexual nature. Looking deep enough into other text and films of recent works like the hit show *Supernatural* or *Game of Thrones* other forms of male fracturing can be found. Whereas Carter uses fairytales in order to give females back control of their sexuality, she fails to do so with the men and perhaps a closer look into the male identification within literature needs to happen in order to give men that same freedom with their sexuality.

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BREAKING THE SEX CODE: HIEROGAMY AS A PAST CHRISTIAN RITE IN *THE DA VINCI CODE*

RAVEN A. EGGLESTON

Has sex always been regarded as a “dirty” word? If not, then when was sex made dirty? And who made it that way? *The Da Vinci Code*, by Dan Brown, constructs a fictional story providing possible answers to these questions. This *fictional* novel created much controversy amongst its viewers. The book centers on the protagonist, Robert Langdon, who is a suspect in the murder of a Louvre curator named Jacques Sauniere. Langdon is able to flee with help from Sophie Neveu, a police cryptologist and the granddaughter of Jacques Sauniere. They begin their journey in search for the Holy Grail and eventually find out that it is hidden in Leonard Da Vinci’s painting of the Last Supper. Conflict arises the Opus Dei, which is an actual Catholic organization, is also in search of the Holy Grail. Why is the Holy Grail so important? The Holy Grail holds a secret that has been kept for many years. The Opus Dei is portrayed as trying to keep the Holy Grail a secret in efforts to withhold its mystery from destroying Christianity.

The book, as well as the film released in 2007 by director Ron Howard, received harsh disapproval by its angry commentators. The book revealed the belief of a secret that has been kept for over two thousand years, about a marriage between Jesus Christ and Mary Magdelene and the birth of a child.. This belief is what shook the world and changed the view of Christianity as a whole. The novel provides implication that there was a true marriage of Jesus and Mary Magdelene. In this case, the marriage would be defined as hierogamy. Hierogamy derives from the Greek words *hieros gamos* meaning “sacred marriage.” Hierogamy is a sexual ceremony which displayed a marriage between a god and a goddess, or a man and a woman acting as a god or a goddess. This ritual has been seen in ancient texts such as “The Marriage of Inanna and Dumuzi,” “The Wedding of Hera and Zeus,” and “The Epic

of Gilgamesh,” which explore this ritual in a mythological context. Like these texts, *The Da Vinci Code* exposes hierogamy and eroticism as a past religious rite of the Christian belief, the body as an origin of desire, as well as the ritual being for the necessity of constructing civilization. If those were the sole purposes of the sacred sex, then why would Christianity suppress this part of sexuality? *The Da Vinci Code* reveals how modern religion has turned what used to be sacred as sinful.

Although *The Da Vinci Code* is a fictional text, it uses historical and factual references throughout the novel. One of the most controversial scenes in *The Da Vinci Code* is titled, The Sacrosanct Ceremony. In this scene, Sophie Neveu flashes back to a time when she discovered her grandfather, Jacques Sauniere, engaged in sex. During this scene, Sophie in distraught, recounts what she witnessed. She describes the scene recalling the sight of, “women in white gossamer with golden shoes. They held golden orbs. The men wore black tunics and black shoes” (Brown 334). Robert Langdon astonished to hear about the ceremony revealed to Sophie, as well as its readers, that the ceremony she saw was *hieros gamos*. The scene that Sophie discovered was part of the ritual. The “androgynous masks,” “golden orbs,” and “black and white gowns” were used as props for creating the sacred marriage (Brown 334). Robert Langdon goes on to explain the history of the ritual and its purpose. He describes the “sacred marriage” as a “union.” Although what Sophie witnessed may have looked like sex, sex is “not as we see it today” (Brown 335).

“Historically, intercourse was the act through which male and female experienced God” (Brown 335), which made this act spiritual. Sex during this time period was not seen as wrong, as it is today. Sex was utilized as a rite of passage, one of which would lead you into a relationship with Christ. Christian spirituality in connection with sexuality is identified as sacred because of the intimacy between two partners as governed by a higher power. Hieros gamos in the Christian religion, was a ritual that reenacted the “sacred marriage” that was between Jesus and Mary Magdelene. “The Marriage of Inanna and Dumuzi” creates the *hieros gamos*

ritual as well. Although this element of mysticism originated in Sumer, the ritual produces the same meaning. The Sumerian version of *hieros gamos* is acted by humans acting as dieties. The female representing Inanna and the male posing as Dumuzi. In Sumerian mythology, Inanna is identified as the “Queen of Heaven” and “the goddess who rules over the sky, the Earth, and the underworld” (Wolkstein xvi). In the poem, Inanna begins by saying:

My vulva, the horn
The Boat of Heaven
Is full of eagerness like the young moon
My untilled lands lie fallow. (Reweaving)

These words were said by two humans acting as Inanna and Dumuzi. She compares her body to “the boat of heaven,” one that transfers man to god. Dumuzi responds saying,

Great Lady, the king will plow your vulva
I, Dumuzi the King, will plow your vulva. (Reweaving)

He attains a kingship through intercourse with the goddess Inanna. The Sumerians belief of fertilization of the land is explained in the narration of the poem.

At the king's lap stood the rising cedar.
Plants grew high by their side.
Grains grew high by their side.
Gardens flourished luxuriantly. (Reweaving)

The sacrosanct ceremony displayed in *The Da Vinci Code* was much like that of “The Marriage of Inanna and Dumuzi.” Jacques Saunier and the woman he was engaged in sex with were acting out the ritual, one of which Sophie was not supposed to see.

My eager impetuous caresser of the navel,
My caresser of the soft thighs;

Raven Eggleston

He is the one my womb loves best,
My high priest is ready for the holy loins.
My lord Dumuzi is ready for the holy loins.
The plants and herbs in his field are ripe.
O Dumuzi, Your fullness is my delight. (Reweaving)

The “Holy loins” become a representation of the female genitalia. In this story, the female genitalia embodies the source of human desire. The words that are being said during this sexual ceremony, was much like the men’s chanting in *The Da Vinci Code*. Through this ritual, the human gains a spiritual connection with the gods, like that which was displayed in *The Da Vinci Code*.

In *The Da Vinci Code*, Sophie hears “discerning chanting” at the sight of the ritual. Although we are not told the exact words chanted, we understand that these two separate scenes imitate the same ritual. In this scene, the surrounded worshippers were dressed in black and white. These men and women were standing around the bed/alter on which Sophie saw her grandfather engaged in sex. The set-up of the alter being much like that of “The Marriage of Inanna and Dumuzi.” It is said that she is sent to prepare the bed:

Let the bed that rejoices the heart be prepared
Let the bed that sweetens the loins be prepared
Let the bed of kingship be prepared!
Let the bed of queenship be prepared!
Let the royal bed be prepared! (Reweaving)

Robert explains to her that the ritual is not about the sex, but is a ceremony displaying spirituality. The Sumerians spiritual believe that by reenacting this ritual, they would gain fertility for the people and for the land. The eroticism in this poem expresses the “vulva” as the body. The body then creates the origin of desire. Inanna expresses the sexuality and also the spirituality in the hieros gamos ritual when she says,

The King went with lifted head to the holy loins.
He went with lifted head to the loins of Inanna
He went to the queen with lifted head.
He opened wide his arms to the holy priestess of heaven.
(Reweaving)

In the climax of *hieros gamos*, when an orgasm is reached, knowledge is received. A desire that climaxes to a point that one would then have a connection with God. Brown provides historical content relating the ritual to ancient times stating, "Physical union with the female remained the sole means through which man could become spiritually complete and ultimately achieve gnosis-knowledge of the divine" (Brown 335). When the orgasm was achieved, that is when the male's mind would go blank and it was at that moment, when he could see God. The church saw gaining in this knowledge as dangerous, for it was knowledge that Eve had attained by eating the forbidden fruit. Eve was the fallen woman and knowledge was a sin.

"King by Love of Inanna" proposes the theory that this ritual was also thought to be the making of a king or creating an heir. This would mean that after the Virgin Mary's birth of creating a biblical King, Jesus Christ, his relations with Mary Magdalene also creates an heir. Philip Jones says that *hieros gamos* is a ritual "marking the king as the figure who mediates between the human and divine worlds" (Jones 291). Jesus Christ was the figure who was sacrificed for all human sins. The marking of the king explains how the union between Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene would be viewed as sacred.

Robert and Sophie continue to investigate Leonardo Da Vinci's "The Last Supper" and the Holy Grail. They decipher Da Vinci's portrait, which is a clear display of modern day communion, reminding us "After dinner, Jesus took the cup of wine, sharing it with his disciples" (Brown 259). "The Cup of Christ. The Holy Grail" (Brown 259), is also a chalice, one which is missing in the painting. Before the book reaches the climax, we gain more history concerning "Christian philosophy [deciding]

to embezzle the female's creative power by ignoring biological truth and making *man* the creator" (Brown 259). The creation of humans began after the fall of Eve. The pain of child birth is seen as a punishment in Christianity. In ancient times, "the ability of the woman to be able to produce life from her womb made her sacred" (Brown 335), and showed strength. Eve creates what was known as the "sacred feminine."

Amy Welborn, author of *Decoding Da Vinci: The Facts Behind the Fiction of the Da Vinci Code*, defines the "sacred feminine" as "a spirituality that was balanced between the masculine and the feminine, in which goddesses and the power of women were revered" (Welborn 14). Mary Magdelene became a figure in the "sacred feminine" movement when Jesus left her as the lead. "The Marriage of Inanna and Dumuzi" has a goddess who was seen as part of the "sacred feminine" as well. These two women represent fertility. Mary Magdelene was represented as the chalice. The chalice, metaphorically speaking of the womb. *The Da Vinci Code* then exposes the harsh reality that "The legend of the Holy Grail is a legend about royal blood. When Grail legend speaks of that chalice that held the blood of Christ...it speaks, in fact, of Mary Magdelene" (Brown 270). When the fact is exposed Sophie asks, "the prostitute?" (Brown 270).

In "The Epic of Gilgamesh," Gilgamesh was a ravenous blood thirsty beast. He was half man- half god, like Jesus Christ. Gilgamesh has relations with a "sacred prostitute." It was believed by the Romans that sacred marriage, not today's marriage but union, cleansed men of their transgressions and it passed as forgiveness to the gods. Mary Magdelene served as a chalice of connecting Jesus Christ with God. Christianity's communion represents this same idea. Breaking "bread" as in taking part of the "body" and drinking "wine," a representation of the "Holy Blood." Sacred prostitutes were women that cleansed men. Christianity's communion is a modern representation of this same act. It shows the transitioning from the past religious rite, *hieros gamos*, acting as an equivalent but less sexual and still erotic.

“The Chalice. The Holy Grail. The Rose” (Brown 275), are all representations of Mary Magdelene. The book reveals that the secret code was not an object, but instead an important figure in biblical history. Each of these act as a symbol of Mary Magdelene. The chalice and the Holy Grail represent Mary Magdelene as the holder of Christ’s blood. Mary Magdelene is also identified as the rose. Langdon talks about how the rose is a reference to female sexuality and the “rose has ties to the five pointed pentacle of Venus and the guiding compass Rose” (Brown 275).

In the Christian faith the pentacle has been known to represent the five wounds of Christ, but *The Da Vinci Code* tells us that it has also been used in “primitive goddess cults” like that of Inanna (Brown 275). The star then defines the five stages of the female life, “birth, menstruation, motherhood, menopause, and death. The rose is then a representation of female genital as, the source of birthing mankind, a possession that only the “sacred feminine” could possess.

“The ancients believed that the male was spiritually incomplete until he had carnal knowledge of the sacred feminine” (Brown 335). This proves to be true in “The Epic of Gilgamesh.” In the beginning Enkidu was seduced and cultivated by a *harmitu*, who then lead him to the city and to Gilgamesh. For it was not until he experienced sex with the prostitute, who tamed his beastly ways. A *harmitu* is a sacred prostitute in Mesopotamian literature. It states:

And he possessed her ripeness.
She was not bashful as she welcomed his ardor.
She laid aside her cloth and he rested upon her.
She treated him, the savage, to a woman’s task.
As his love was drawn unto her. (Pritchard 43)

Prostitution in Mesopotamia was a sacred job. Lerner explains that the Mesopotamians believed “the caring for the gods included, in some cases, offering them sexual services” (Lerner 239). This was provided to the priestess or king that acted as the gods. It was

this reason that, “a separate class of temple [sacred] prostitutes developed. The sacred prostitute reappears again with Gilgamesh.

Let your clothes be clean,
Let your head be wasted, May you be in the water?
Gaze on the child who holds your hand,
Let your wife enjoy your repeated embrace (Pritchard 44).

In this text, Gilgamesh must learn how to act more human. The prostitute was again used to tame, humanize, and bring a civilized Gilgamesh to society. Tzvi Abusch explains in his essay, “The Development and Meaning of the Epic of Gilgamesh: An Interpretive Essay” that, “women here represent the values of life and its affirmation in the face of the heroic and the absolute” (Abusch 614).

“The Wedding of Hera and Zeus” was thought to be the original love story. It is believed that the Greek/Roman gods are who created man. Therefore Mesopotamians and Sumerians would perform this ritual as thanks for creation. The same ceremony that Sophie’s grandfather was performing. There would be a celebration and the ceremony was to be publicly displayed. Sumerians would bring gifts to the altar.

Needless to say, *The Da Vinci Code* explains the fall of the “sacred marriage.” Christianity suppressed sexuality because the men of the church began to fear that their once connection with god by a spiritual union with a woman, were now sexual urges that they considered a sin. The church then decided to ban the ritual. Also being a patriarchal society, getting rid of the “sacred feminine” then keeps man in control.

In *The Da Vinci Code*, Brown creates the assumption that, “the Priory’s tradition of perpetuating goddess worship is based on a belief that powerful men in the early Christian church ‘conned’ the world by propagating lies that devalued the female and tipped the scales in favor of the masculine” (Brown 133). Brown uses historical “fact” to show how the church turned the ancient matriarchal paganism into a demonized sacred feminine. He says they turned it into “patriarchal Christianity,” by “waging a campaign of pro-

paganda against women” (Brown 133). Throughout the narration he tries to argue that the church had a cruel and violent past. He commits to a belief that the church took part of “brutal crusades to reeducate the pagan and feminine worshipping” by deeming that women who were “scholars, priestesses, gypsies, and midwives” were “witches” (Brown 134). Brown proposes that it was this unknown fact that “obliterated the goddess from modern religion forever” (Brown 133). He even goes forth providing the title of a book, *Malleus Maleficarum* or *The Witches Hammer*, to convince his readers of the realness or truth of this supposed horrible event. The book constructs the belief that it was “freethinking” women that caused dangers between man and God. At this instant, women had too much power, a power that was over men.

If this holds true then as a result we find that the church created the “holy communion” in efforts of maintaining the belief but also keeping control. Holy Communion is a mere rendition of the sacred union between Jesus Christ and Mary Magdelene. Breaking bread would then represent, “the revered union of the *two halves* of the human spirit-male and female” (Brown 335). Part taking of the body would be represented in the intercourse of sex by “through which the male could find spiritual wholeness and *communion* with God” (Brown 335).

One fact that the novel fails to acknowledge is whether the church actually condemns sex. The churches primary source of information is that of the Bible. The Bible does not completely condemn sex, in fact it promotes it, but the promotion is under circumstances. 1 Corinthians 7:2-4 states:

But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. ³ The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. ⁴ The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does*; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does* (NASB).

The controversy towards the book was not only because it made claims that its details were “facts,” it was also because it made Jesus Christ seem more human and less divine. If Jesus had been more like man, he would be a born sinner. Claims that Jesus and Mary Magdalene had sexual relations and the birth of a child also upset its readers. Many readers were not sure whether the “facts” in the novel should be taken seriously. After the publishing of Dan Brown’s novel, authors such as Mary Welborn, author of *De-Coding Da Vinci* and *De-Coding Mary Magdalene*, decided to analyze his story and investigate the historical references he produced. Despite the conflict he received after the publishing of *The Da Vinci Code*, he published the novel’s sequel *The Lost Symbol* in 2009. But is it so bad that Jesus is seen more as a human? Bringing Jesus Christ outside of the church may create more followers. To see or hear about a figure that is possibly “someone like them” would help gain more followers of the Christian faith.

In fact, news about hieros gamos has begun to reappear today. In today’s pop culture, the Prince William and Kate Middleton fandom created many assumptions of the prince and his bride’s wedding ceremonies. The fans believed that there was going to be a secretly staged “sacred marriage.” Because of this huge fandom, fans and companies began to create several types of products to sell as celebration of this upcoming heir. Products such as condoms called “Crown Jewels” and “Royal Virility Performance,” which is a beer that contains aphrodisiacs and a Viagra supplement. These products explicitly show how this fandom has grown. Fans have gone to extreme measures of finding out more when it comes to the “sacred marriage” ritual. One fan discusses the wardrobe of Kate Middleton and the choice of wearing blue on the day the couple publicly announced their engagement. She says on her blog, “I suspect the royal symbolism behind a blue dress for both women [Kate and Diana] is linking them to the Virgin Mary (certainly in Diana’s case), ruler of the celestial skies and wife/mother to children of a deity” (Stargurl). In an interview Prince William claims, “It is very special to me. It was my way to make sure my mother did not miss out on today and the excitement

that we are going to spend the rest of our lives together” (Stargurl) about giving his mother’s wedding ring to Kate. They may have seemed like a kind touching gesture, but fans thought otherwise. Some believing that “it does seem a bit morbid to pass on an engagement ring from a marriage that was such a public failure, not to mention the ring of a woman who died under mysterious circumstances” and that the sapphire ring is a representation of Saturn, which “brings limitation and obstruction and is the planet of bad karma or unfortunate destiny” (Stargurl).

“The Marriage of Inanna and Dumuzi,” The Wedding of Hera and Zeus,” and “The Epic of Gilgamesh” show how women in the past were viewed as sacred. These three texts used the hieros gamos ritual to show a divine image of sex between a god and a goddess or creation of a king. *The Da Vinci Code* exposed the ideals of the Christian church causing much controversy. Readers gain a sense that the characters in *The Da Vinci Code* are reliable. He provides occasional facts within the story that rather serve more as claims. As the story develops, and the “secret code” is revealed, readers find themselves engaged in the plot and that is when the facts become believable. Although, the book is a fictional text, in the end it still provides knowledge, which was the author’s primary purpose.

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CHRISTOPHER RICE'S NAÏVE MANIPULATION
OF HIERONYMUS BOSCH'S
THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS
AND THE BRETHERN OF THE FREE SPIRIT

ASHLEY WESTMORELAND

The novel *The Snow Garden* by Christopher Rice follows the lives of three freshmen's exploration with sexuality. A man hires one of the freshmen, Randall, to have a sexual relationship with a professor, Eric, in order to ruin his life. Eric's academic career revolves around the study of Hieronymus Bosch's painting *The Garden of Earthly Delights* and its connection with an old religious group called the Brethren of the Free Spirit. Bosch's painting, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, is triptych and was created during the Middle Ages. The middle panel is flanked by two other oak rectangular wings that close over the center. The outer wings, when folded, show a grisaille painting of the earth during the biblical myth of Creation. The left panel depicts God introducing Eve to Adam. The central panel portrays sexually engaged nude figures, fantastical animals, oversized fruit and hybrid stone formations. The right panel depicts Hell and various torture scenes. In *The Snow Garden*, Eric creates an experiment that would involve a group of students acting out the scenes portrayed in Bosch's painting. The main goal of the experiment was to isolate their sexual desires and then wean themselves from it gradually. Eric wanted to believe that sexual desire could be expunged from the body.

However, the leader of the graduate students, Mitchell, manipulates the experiment and has the group come together once a week to satisfy their most base physical desires. The group of graduate students take on the same ideology as the Brethren of the Free Spirit, believing that they are incapable of sin. Mitchell decides to drug the other members in order to lower the inhibitions and allow them to experience their sexual desires without

any restrictions. All the members, except for Mitchell, display a sense of naivety; they allow Mitchell to manipulate them in order to achieve his goal of creating a type of “cult” to control. The ideology of the Brethren is shown by Mitchell killing Eric’s wife because she figures out what the group is doing and Mitchell cannot allow the “cult” to end. Mitchell takes on the same mentality as the Brethren to justify his sexual desires and manipulate the group. In *The Snow Garden*, Christopher Rice satirizes a group’s naivety towards the theories surrounding Hieronymus Bosch’s *The Garden of Earthly Delights* and their manipulation of the ideology of the Brethren of the Free Spirit when justifying the group’s actions.

In *The Snow Garden*, Christopher Rice begins his satirizing of Bosch’s painting with a professor, Eric, who bases his academic career on theories of the painting. Eric’s theory of Bosch’s *The Garden of Earthly Delights* is that he “wasn’t truly a member of the established church, but a migrated Cathar who held the heretical belief that the earth was Satan’s terrain, and the body a trap from which one must spiritually escape, and whose vile desires must be denied” (Rice 31). Rice satirizes the theories surrounding Bosch’s painting by changing Eric’s opinion, stating that “the body wasn’t a trap, but a door to sensations he had denied himself for far too long” after having an inappropriate relationship with a male student (31).

Eric publishes a book based on his theory that focuses on Bosch’s central panel in *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. In his book, Eric states that

twentieth-century viewers of Bosch’s work have demonstrated a reluctance to view his *Garden of Earthly Delights* as a condemnation of human sexuality consonant with the established views of the medieval church. In particular, the central panel, with its deceptively beautiful depiction of a paradise earth, has been the subject of relentless speculation. (Rice 367)

Eric brings forth a theory on the central panel, stating that he “put forth a highly questionable but nonetheless wildly popular theory that the entire altar piece was commissioned by a secret heretical cult known as the Brethren of the Free Spirit, and that the central panel is actually a depiction of the cult’s religious rites” (Rice 367). The Brethren of the Free Spirit was an old religious group in the 13th and 14th century. The Brethren had “practices [that] included some form of ritual promiscuity, and that its members believed that unrestrained sexual activity was a method they could use to return themselves to the state of purity possessed by Adam before the fall” (Rice 367). One ideologist of the Brethren of the Free Spirit theorized that “in the early thirteenth century, a number of theologians at Paris were preaching a pantheistic Christianity” (Harrison 1). David of Dinant taught that God was identical with primary matter: “It is manifest that there is only one substance, not only of all bodies, but also of all souls, and that this substance is nothing else but God himself. . . It is clear, then, that God and Matter and Mind are one substance” (Harrison 1). Another theorist, “Amalric of Bena (also known as Amaury de Bene), held that God was the formal principle of all things, and that every single person was as much God as was Christ” (Harrison 1). Harrison states that “the works of both men were condemned as heretical and burned. In 1215 Amalric's bones were exhumed and reburied in an unconsecrated field” (Harrison 1). Harrison continues with more history on the theorist, stating that

after Amalric's death in 1207 a group of fourteen clerics, which included Amalric's secretary, began to profess pantheistic beliefs. They held that ‘all things are One, because whatever is, is God.’ They believed that, just as the time of the Patriarchs was the age of the Father, and the Christian era to date the age of the Son, so now a new age of the Holy Spirit was dawning, and they were its heralds. One of the ringleaders proclaimed that he was God, and therefore he could not be burned by fire or hurt by torture. (Harrison 1)

The main belief of the Brethren was that “if everything is God, then everything is also good. It follows that there can be no such thing as sin” (Harrison 1). One variation of the ideology of the Brethren differs from the group’s mentality in the book, which was “their refusal of works [...] as the adepts believed that sin was a fraud, they believed that property -- the result of work, humanity’s punishment for Original Sin -- was a falsehood. Thus all things were to be held in common, and work to be understood as hell, which was ignorance -- only fools worked. Work was a sin against perfect nature” (Harrison 1). In *The Snow Garden*, Christopher Rice satirizes the theories surrounding Bosch’s *Garden of Earthly Delights* and employs the ideology of the Brethren of the Free Spirit to justify Eric’s idea to perform his experiment. Eric wants to achieve his ideology about Bosch’s painting because he “had spent years suppressing what [he] really wanted, and [he] was intoxicated by the idea that sexual desire could be expunged from our bodies” (Rice 470). Eric is a closet homosexual who views his sexual desires as wrong and even hides behind a marriage as a way to prove that the desire does not exist. Eric does not change his beliefs until after having a sexual relationship with a male student. Eric’s actions with his male student and his experiment group coincide with Bosch’s main purpose for his painting, which was to show the evil consequences of sexual desire.

In *The Snow Garden*, the leader of the group, Mitchell, is a graduate student whose area of study is Bosch’s *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. Mitchell was the man Eric went to first with his theory about stopping sexual desires by using Bosch’s painting as a focus object. Afterwards, Mitchell chooses the members after a screening process. The inductees are told to write an essay explaining their previous sexual experience, and Eric decides if they are allowed to join in on the experiment. Also, the inductees are tested for every sexually transmitted disease to ensure they are not a risk to the other members. The inductees seem to be chosen based off their negative experiences with sexuality.

The negative experience requirement for the inductee is shown with the induction of one member, Lauren. Lauren’s experience

with sexuality began at an early age when she was molested by her uncle. Lauren submits an essay to Eric, stating that

how was a nine-year-old supposed to know that something that felt so good, something that was not accompanied by violence, was wrong? At the time, it was not clear that [her] uncle's affections came from an adult world that could potentially render me—a nine-year-old year with no knowledge of her sexuality—powerless [...] [and she has wondered] whether or not that at the age of nine, [she] had any sexuality to speak of at all. (Rice 225)

Lauren believes “that [she] did, but that it was dormant, lying in wait for the right moment to emerge. [Her] uncle's hands brought it to life before it had a chance to be properly born. As a result, [her] sexuality is the equivalent of a premature baby [that] was brought to life with only poison as nourishment” (Rice 225). Lauren confesses to Eric in the essay that she did “not hate [her] uncle [...] [but believed] he was diseased. And such a diseased man usually ends up infecting others” (Rice 226). Lauren comes to the conclusion that “while molestation was essentially about manipulation and control, the real sin inflicted upon the child involved was the period of disillusion during which the child believes that the actions of their molester are a new and valid form of showing love” (Rice 227-228). Lauren decides to experience a mature sexual experience with another student, Jesse. However, after hearing about Lauren's story, Jesse forms a plan to have Lauren realize that her “uncle hadn't been the one to fill [her] with poison—that job had been accomplished by the therapists who had to tell [her] it was wrong after the fact” (Rice 233). Lauren comes to the conclusion at the end of the essay that she had “allowed [Jesse] to violate [her]. [She] was lulled into a state of complacency by the lust [she] felt for him, and that lust comes from the same place [her] uncle poisoned. The sad reality is that Jesse might have been half-right. How can [she] embrace [her] sexuality when all it wants to do is sink its teeth into [her] and [she] will never be someone capable

of making love” (Rice 234). Professionals defined Lauren’s sexuality after her horrible experience with her uncle. Lauren was not able to truly understand sex because her sexual mentality did not mature with her physical body, which created a disconnection between the two. Lauren’s naïve idea of sex allows her to be a good member of the group because she was permitted to express her idea of sexual desire without being condemned or viewed as sick. The naïve disconnection towards sex enabled Mitchell to manipulate and control Lauren’s sexuality with his own theory of Bosch’s painting and the Brethren’s ideology, because she has no proper understanding of her sexuality.

One ideology surrounding Bosch comes from Peter Glum, who agrees that Bosch’s “so-called *Garden of Earthly Delights*, especially that of its center panel, remains controversial and elusive” (45). Peter Glum states from Tolnay that he “speaks of Bosch’s replacing the idea of transcendent divine judgment by the notion popular in the Middle Ages of an immanent judgment as a consequence of man’s sinfulness and foolishness. He recognizes that the panels of the *Garden of Earthly Delights* are differentiated according to the scheme of the *Last Judgment*” (45). Glum disagrees with Tolnay’s theory surrounding Bosch’s reasoning for creating *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, stating that

the painting may indeed represent a divine judgment, but not a last judgment at the end of time, nor an apocalyptic vision as in the *Last Judgment* triptychs attributed to Bosch in Vienna and Bruges. Only in the wings do the symbolism and the composition allude to judgment. In the center panel we see what looks like a carnival of pleasures in a garden resembling a paradise. But the nakedness of the figures is eschatological and points to the fact that the delights are sins. (45)

Glum’s opinion is similar to the professor’s in *The Snow Garden* at the beginning of his academic career, believing that sexual desires are sins. Continuing Glum’s theory on Bosch’s reasoning

for creating his painting, he states that a theory surrounding the painting was the “idea that the *Garden of Earthly Delights* was, in his time, understood as a Last Judgment” (45). Glum says that in the “*Garden of Earthly Delights*, God as Christ is shown on the left wing and also as the creator on the outer wings. The presence of the *Creation of the World* on the outside may also support the idea of a Last Judgment, providing a beginning for the end of an eschatological *Summa*. That the world is shown in a transparent globe may also refer to the Last Judgment” (45). Glum continues with his interpretations by stating, “busts of Christ holding such a globe, dating from the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century, may be interpreted as representing the resurrected Christ in judgment at the end of time rather than Christ the Savior with the redeemed world” (45). Bosch illustrates the globe repeatedly in his painting, continuing with one “found below Christ in Bosch’s own *Last Judgment* on the *Table of the Seven Sins*. In Bosch’s panels we might even have an ironical reference to crystallo-mancy so popular in his time, though outlawed by the Church” (Glum 47). Glum’s statement that a piece illustrated in Bosch’s painting was outlawed coincides with the forbidden acts of the group in *The Snow Garden* in order to express their sexual desires. The group wants an outlet to express their sexual desires that are not viewed as normal by society.

Having the group manipulate the ideology surrounding the painting allows Christopher Rice the opportunity to demonstrate man’s hidden desires and the lengths they are willing to take in order to achieve them. This is demonstrated by the group’s actions when their “cult” is threatened by outside forces. The leader, Mitchell, kills Eric’s wife after she finds out about the happenings in the house. Eric does not allow other judgments to cloud his nature when it comes to protecting his property. Mitchell creates his own opinion concerning the “last judgment” theory surrounding Bosch’s painting. The “Last Judgment” theory could transfer into the reasoning behind the group’s reluctance to adhere to their “creators” wishes. In order to understand the mentality behind the member’s resistance, a person must understand the

theory surrounding Bosch's painting, which Glum does by stating that "an important indication that the *Garden of Earthly Delights* represents an immanent judgment is the composition of the central panel, which is flanked [...] by wings representing Paradise and Hell. Its composition provides striking parallels to the traditional Last Judgment pictures" (47). Glum also states, "at the upper part of the *Garden of Earthly Delights* we see a grouping of three large, Henry Moore-like forms in the place [...] [that] are supplemented by two smaller such forms above, where the groups of angels with the instruments of the Passion would ordinarily be seen" (47). To understand the group's mentality in Rice's *The Snow Garden*, the reader must be able to understand the theories surrounding Bosch's painting, and Glum illustrates one of them. The theories surrounding Bosch become a basis for the member's to use in order to justify their actions.

Another interpretation of Bosch's painting that links it to Rice's story comes from Gombrich, who remarked that, "it seems to [him] that we are much more likely to make further progress in the 'decoding of Bosch' by reading the Bible and its commentaries than by studying the kind of esoteric lore that has attracted so many of Bosch's interpreters" (Dempsey 249). Dempsey continues that "Gombrich redrew attention to the verse written across the two exterior panels of the *Garden of Earthly Delights*, where we see an image of the earth as a flat disc enclosed within a glass sphere, with the land, fresh and of a paradisiacal beauty, floating upon a surrounding sea [and] the earth, where its edges are washed by the salty waters of the ocean, seems strangely threatened by fleshy, even obscene, forms arising from the depths and beginning to erode it at the margins" (Dempsey 249). In order to satirize the theory surrounding the *Garden of Earthly Delights*, Rice had to understand what Bosch was trying to depict. Gombrich states that

Siguencia, who described it in 1605, saw in the central panel a symbolic representation of the vanity of worldly pleasures signified by the strawberries, a fruit whose fragrance 'one can hardly smell ere it passes'. However much later interpreta-

tions may have differed, they have all taken it for granted that the key to this enigmatic representation must be found in a knowledge of Bosch's symbolism. (162)

Even with many interpretations of Bosch's painting, Gombrich stands in the opinion that "the central panel should be read as a symbolic representation of the transience of worldly pleasures" (162). This opinion remains similar to the professor's theory on Bosch's reasoning for creating the painting. Another interpretation of Bosch's painting stems from Gibson, stating that Bosch's "artistic genius is especially evident in his depiction of devils, whole legions of ugly misshapen creatures who swarm through his infernal landscapes and subject their victims to an eternity of torment and pain" (205). The evilness of the images portrayed in Bosch's painting transfers to the individuals who use the painting as a basis for their desires. The group bases their sexuality on the horrific sexual images portrayed in the painting.

Eric's theory prompts him to create an experiment to confirm how Bosch's main theme in his painting was to purge others of their desires and to use the Brethren's ideology to justify the experiment. Rice satirizes the ideology of the Brethren by having the experiment go in a different direction than Eric wanted. The professor gives a group of graduate students control of an old house he owns. The leader of the group hosts what he "calls a purging. Once a week the members gather to satisfy their most base physical desires in hopes of cleansing their bodies of carnal temptation, in the name of accessing a more superior intellectual terrain in the morning" (Rice 469). The professor wished for the group "to isolate their sexual desire, and then wean themselves from it gradually" (Rice 427). The professor believed that

given the preponderance of evidence that Bosch may have been a mitigated Cathar who held the belief that the physical world was Satan's terrain, it is possible to speculate that the Brethren of the Free Spirit were not truly a sect of medieval "love children" reveling in the unbridled pleasures of the

flesh, but rather a secret cult that used sexual promiscuity in a ritual fashion designed to help them escape the trappings of the flesh. (Rice 368)

The professor did not account for his graduate students eventually establishing the same mentality as the Brethren of the Free Spirit and creating a cult whose main focus is to just have sex. By having the members disregard the main reason behind the experiment, Rice mocks Bosch's goal of having men realize that their sexual desire is wrong and should eventually give them up by manipulating them into the Brethren ideology that men are incapable of sins. The manipulation of the Brethren ideology portrays the group's need to express their sexuality and spirituality. In *The Snow Garden*, Eric is ultimately trying to achieve this repression and uses the Bosch painting as a focus point for the plan. Rice mocks the plan by allowing the group to disregard the professor's orders and begin their own experiment of their sexual desires. However, the group's secret eventually becomes revealed and the media claims them as a cult with sadistic desires. Even if the group had followed through with Eric's plan, the members would have been perceived as individuals with sadistic beliefs because people view sex in a standard way that disallows any variation.

Another way to interpret Bosch's work is a scientific approach that may help to understand the reasons why Rice satirizes the *Garden of Earthly Delights* in *The Snow Garden*. Eric, the professor, decides to create an experiment that mocks the *Garden of Earthly Delights* by manipulating the ideology of the Brethren of the Free Spirit. Dixon brings in a scientific background to Bosch that carried into his painting by stating that he had an "involvement with alchemy [...] and alchemists sought to achieve the salvation of the world/ macrocosm through healing the microcosm of Man's body. The transmutation from flawed (sick) to perfect (healed) was accomplished by prayer, study, and physical suffering in imitation of the Passion of Christ, by whose example success could be attained" (98). The scientific approach demonstrated in Bosch's painting comes from "the subject matter and organization of the

Garden of Earthly Delights triptych is identical to the basic alchemical allegory which sees distillation as the cyclical creation, destruction, and rebirth of the world and its inhibitions" (Dixon99). Dixon continues, "Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden [...] were joined by Christ as universal doctor and scientist- a scene that Bosch duplicates in the "Joining of Adam and Eve" panel. The ensuing multiplication of Adam and Eve into the peoples of earth is the subject of Bosch's center panel and corresponds to the gradual unification of the four elements into a balanced, whole body" (99). Dixon states that

this stage was called "coagulation," or "child's play" when the four elements joyfully coupled in imitation of the first parents. At this time the alchemist watched his mixtures bubble and ferment in the laboratory vessel. Then came the dreaded "putrification" process, or rotting and blackening of the bodies of the parents and their children, accomplished in the hottest fire possible. This stage, governed by Saturn, was compared to death, the agony of Hell, and the destruction of the world. (99-100)

The scientific approach allows for a "comparison of the creation of the world with the creation of an Elixir capable of restoring the Garden of Eden was one of the most popular and most ancient alchemical concepts" (Dixon 100). Bosch depicts a variation of Hell in his painting, which can be compared to the alchemist's final stage in an experiment. If Bosch's alchemist involvement transfers into his painting, then the experiment that Eric creates in *The Snow Garden* can be shown in a scientific light that allows for a justification of the group's actions.

Even though Christopher Rice's novel offers a new outlook on Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, the mentality of the group portrays a naïve approach towards sexuality, because the group manipulates a painting created during the Middle Ages to justify their deviant sexual desire. Mitchell uses the ideology of the Brethren of the Free Spirit to justify his controlling actions

and dangerous decisions. The horrible events surrounding the group reveal how human nature manipulates anything in order to achieve people's own inner deviance. The fact that the group chooses individuals with horrible sexual experiences suggest that the only people who are able to be manipulated are the ones with a weakness in mentality.

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THE AMERICAN JEZEBELS

CATHERINE EVANS

Critical examinations of the writings about Anne Hutchinson and by Atwood allow critics to draw conclusions about the discourse surrounding female bodies, spirituality, and eroticism throughout American history. The discourse, a connection between religious deviance and allegations of sexual deviance, begins with the first woman, Eve, traces to Queen Jezebel, continues through the Puritan community and into future societies. Religion indoctrinates women with a belief system that establishes a gender-based hierarchy. Religious and social leaders use fairy tales to indoctrinate girls at a young age in order to confine them to their roles within society. Because few women challenge the belief system, women who chose to deviate from social norms develop “unnatural births” as a warning to other women to remain within social and religious boundaries. Anne Hutchinson rebelled against Puritan authorities; therefore, the men, fearing her influence on others, shunned Anne from the Puritan community. As a result of her rebellion, Puritan authorities claim she had delivered a “monstrous birth” after leaving the community in order to contain other women and prevent them from following in Anne’s path. In addition to her religious deviance, Anne was believed to have been sexually transgressive. Anne Hutchinson reveals a connection between childbearing, or the perversion of the unborn child, as a consequence of female transgressiveness and female religious dissent. Following the path of Anne Hutchinson, an early feminist and religious rebel, Margaret Atwood takes the feminist movement to its logical, oppressive conclusion in her novel *The Handmaid’s Tale*; thus, revealing the repercussions of religious perpetuation of Eve’s sin onto all women in order to create a gender hierarchy.

Society perpetuates the sin of Eve onto all women, confining them to the domestic sphere. Society misinterprets The Fall as a paradigm which reveals women as inherently inferior to men. The

social paradigm portrays men and women as inherently different; therefore, they should be kept in separate roles. Men occupy the public sphere wherein they deal with politics, economics, and social issues. Women, however, are in the domestic sphere and must deal with the home and children. This socially constructed paradigm, which critics trace to Adam and Eve, instigates John Milton's argument in *Paradise Lost*. In his poem, Milton attempts to "justify the ways of God to men" (Milton 1:26). Milton exemplifies the consequences of female empowerment through the recreation of The Fall. Adam left Eve unprotected; consequently, Satan encounters an opportunity to tempt the "weaker sex" into sinning. Milton argues if Adam had protected Eve, they would not have fallen into sin. Milton sets the precedence for restricting female power.

The connection between female religious deviance and its relation to sexual deviance that surrounds female bodies and spirituality begins with Eve in the Garden and her punishment begins the separation between genders. Separate spheres ideology traces back to Adam and Eve and the Fall of Man. God created Eve because "it is not good that the man should be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him" (Genesis 2:18). God made Eve to be a companion to Adam; therefore, God establishes separate spheres for men and women. Consequently, Satan tempts Eve with the forbidden fruit, which causes the Fall of Man. Eve ate the fruit because she had a desire to be more like God. Even as the first woman, she desires knowledge and equality with men. After God discovers their sin, he initiates separate roles for men and women through their designated punishments. To Adam, representative of all men, God commands, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife [.....] Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life" (Genesis 3:17-19). God says to Eve, symbolic of all women, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3:16). Consequently, society uses this punishment to confine women to the domestic sphere and not allowing them

equality with men. Religious leaders distort God's commandments in order to confine women to certain roles within society:

The Garden of Eden saga has appeared in many historical contexts, providing a key set of symbols which have articulated aspects of social conflicts. Beginning with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the saga provides a picture of humanity free of social and physical constraints. Adam and Eve's misuse of that freedom resulted in the proverbial "fall" of humanity. Human freedom was thereafter constrained by physical toil and compulsory subjection to the authority of God. Thus, one aspect of the mythology symbolizes freedom, the other domination. Various social groups attempt to use the story to legitimate their status within society by emphasizing different aspects of the story. (Kurtz 445)

However, when women step outside their roles in society, male leaders punish them and distort the truth, surrounding births for example, in an attempt to scare other women into remaining within their socially constructed boundaries and prevent a rebellion by the entire gender.

Female rebellion does not end with Eve, the first woman; instead, women continue to rebel against religious authorities. Centuries after Eve committed sin against God and was punished, Queen Jezebel attempts to sin against God and the male leaders. The Bible accounts Queen Jezebel in Hebrews 1 and 2. The Biblical Jezebel, who lived centuries after Eve and centuries before Anne Hutchinson, worshipped the god Baal, the god of rain and fertility. Jezebel provokes God's anger when she commands her husband, Ahab, to erect a statue of Baal. Consequently, God declared Queen Jezebel must be destroyed. He prophesized she would be torn apart by dogs. After Queen Jezebel was killed, they continued to slaughter her seventy sons; thus, "fulfilling the prophecy that the Lord would take vengeance on Jezebel's 'poisoned seed'" (LaPlante 246). Queen Jezebel defied the laws

of religion; therefore, she was destroyed in order to prevent other women from dissenting against the male rulers.

Furthermore, Anne Hutchinson, following in the footsteps of Eve and Queen Jezebel, dissents against Puritan leaders and openly criticizes the leaders within the community. Anne Hutchinson, a “feminist icon” dissents against Puritan religious belief and sets the precedence for the feminist movement (LaPlante xvi). Anne Hutchinson attempts to challenge the illusion surrounding the female body and its connection to gender, religion, and social roles. LaPlante, an ancestor of Anne Hutchinson, believes Anne’s influence extends past gender concerns. She states:

But there is more to her story. Because early New England was a microcosm of the modern Western world, the issues Anne Hutchinson raised—gender equality, civil rights, the nature and evidence of salvation, freedom of conscience, and the right to free speech—remain relevant to the American people four centuries later. Hutchinson’s bold engagement in religious, political, and moral conflict early in our history helped to shape how American women see ourselves today—in marriages, in communities, and in the larger society. (LaPlante xvi)

Inadvertently, Anne Hutchinson initiates the movement for female equality. She furthers the rebellion that Eve began. Anne believes women should be allowed the same opportunities as men. She insists that just because she is female she should be allowed to state her opinions on religious matters.

Many women tempt to rebel against authorities within their communities, but feminist goals and ideals vary according to their social predicament. Critics develop different strategies women use to subvert authority. They expound:

Deniz Kandiyoti introduced the term ‘the patriarchal bargain’ to explain how women living under patriarchal strategize to maximize security and optimize their life options. She

showed that women's responses to male dominance vary widely, according to the objective opportunities available under each particular variant of patriarchy. Such responses range from eager collaboration, whereby women act as devout guardians of patriarchal mores and values, to skillful maneuvering to make gains while avoiding overt conflict, to different levels of passive and active resistance. (Sa'ar 680)

Anne Hutchinson undertakes active resistance against patriarchy and religious leaders. She actively and openly expresses her opinions regarding sermons and religious matters. As a Puritan woman, Anne lived within a society that focused on female oppression based on Biblical beliefs. Puritans believed, "the model woman then-modest, meek, submissive, virtuous, obedient, and kind-was solely occupied with supervising and maintaining the home, cooking, and sometimes brewing and dairying, and bearing and rearing children" (LaPlante 41). Because God's punishment for Eve was painful childbirth, religious leaders use this information to contain women to the household. The female inheritance of domesticity and oppression began with Eve's sin and punishment. Religious leaders use Eve as an example of what women should avoid. God did not intend women to be as intelligent as men, validating their statement with God's punishment for Eve. Governor Winthrop, a Puritan leader, encountered a setback when trying to prosecute Anne Hutchinson for her religious dissent. However, Anne Hutchinson believes, "you have power over my body but the Lord Jesus hath power over my body and soul, and assure yourselves thus much, you do as much as in you lies t put the Lord Jesus Christ from you, and if you go on in this course you begin you will bring a curse upon you" (Jehlen 439). Anne Hutchinson could defend herself against the men in authority because of religious belief. However, the patriarchal society in which she lives dictates women obey male leadership. Ironically, the same laws that oppress women prevent Anne Hutchinson from being accused of greater crimes: "He couldn't accuse her of contempt against the state or of sedition because as a woman

she had no public role” (LaPlante 12). Anne Hutchinson held religious meetings within her home, the private sphere; thus, she could not be punished for her opinions even though they differed from those in power. Even though Hutchinson did not commit heresy, Winthrop found her guilty and she was excommunicated from their society. The men, like those who feared Eve and Jezebel’s power, feared that Anne Hutchinson would influence other women, creating a female rebellion. These Puritan patriarchal leaders worry that Anne Hutchinson will create a rebellion, a feminist movement that later develops. They dread the very thing Margaret Attwood would take to conclusion in her novel.

As a cautionary tale for women, religious leaders declare a woman’s piety was directly connected with her pregnancy and birth. For example, “The matter was the birth of a deformed stillborn to a Boston couple, an event that most of their neighbors would have seen as evidence of God’s displeasure with the baby’s parents” (LaPlante 88). An unnatural birth was an indication of woman’s disparity with God. She was looked down upon and not found devout as other women. To prevent other women from following in Anne’s path, Cotton elaborated on the facts of her birth by stating:

she [Anne Hutchinson] brought forth not one (as Mistress Dyer did) but thirty monstrous births or thereabouts, at once; some of them bigger, some lesser, some of one shape, some of another; few of any perfect shape, none at all of them (as far as I could ever learn) of human shape. [...] But see how the wisdom of God fitted this judgment to her sin every way, for look-as she had vented misshapen opinions, so she must bring forth deformed monsters. (LaPlante 218)

Cotton believed by intimidating women with the threat of God’s wrath, women would become complacent with their roles within society. He uses Anne Hutchinson’s miscarriage as a cautionary tale for other women. He evokes the sin of Eve and God’s wrath in order to scare women into remaining within their socially constructed roles. Male leaders perpetuate the ideology that women’s

purpose remains within the boundaries of the home, thus, child-birth. Anne enters the public sphere when she discusses religious matters; consequently, her inappropriate opinions lead to her defective birth. Because she did not focus all her attention on the home and her children, society constructs an unnatural birth to follow her unnatural thoughts. Religious leaders relate:

For these men, the deformed birth, like that of Mary Dyer, demonstrated the obvious link between the intellectual woman and the Devil. Winthrop saw Dyer's stillborn as a Satanic mix of "woman child, a fish, a beast, and a fowl, all woven together in one, and without an head. Women who bore such babies were, like witches, possessed by the Devil. (LaPlante 218)

Through her trial and excommunication, Anne Hutchinson instigated a progression against religious belief and social constructions which oppress women and confine them to the domestic sphere. The religious leaders in the Puritan community attempted to silence Anne Hutchinson to prevent the spread of her ideas; however, "the judges inadvertently gave her what few women of her time enjoyed: a lasting voice. The trial that led to her imprisonment also enables her to speak to us nearly four centuries hence" (LaPlante 138). It is these voices, voices of past feminists, which led Atwood to reveal the consequences of these rebellious women.

Historical female rebels, like Eve, Queen Jezebel, and Anne Hutchinson, initiate the drive within women for equality. Feminism is a movement to bring equality and respect to women; consequently, some female writers strive to accomplish this through subverting male authority. Fairy tales mirror American women's desires for love and marriage; however, in actuality, they perpetuate patriarchal ideology establishing beliefs and judgments about the female body. Religious leaders use fairy tales to indoctrinate women. However, "During the past few years, a number of studies have made the case that antifeminism is a salient, central, and persistent component of evangelical religious subculture and

identity” (Gallagher 452). Religious leaders attempt to thwart the continuation of feminist ideology. By using a historical context, critics compare the discourse on a 1600’s view about the female body and its relation to religion while comparing it to a modern, even futuristic, context which explores the consequences of radical feminism that revert to past cultural constructions.

Society conditions girls at a young age to believe in fairy tales; therefore, girls learn social roles and boundaries early in life. In American culture, the Cinderella paradigm represents how American women view marriage as a fairy tale ending. The culture conditions children from a young age to view marriage as the ultimate ideal. Fairy tales begin embedding the ideals of patriarchy in females at a young age through children’s story books and movies. Because, the main story line in all fairy tales consists of “the female subject as complemented and completed by her relation to a male partner, patriarchy naturalizes sexual identity, masking the cultural construction of the feminine, thereby continually reproducing women in a subordinate position” (Elbert 19). On the contrary, Margaret Atwood, in *The Handmaid’s Tale*, illuminates the consequences of radical feminism by incorporating the rhetorical strategy of *reduction ad absurdum* to reveal the fallacies within the original ideology. Accordingly, Atwood warns radical feminists of the consequences of complete female autonomy within her text by creating a society which reverts to ancient traditions. Fairy tales perpetuate the oppression of women which causes traditional feminist authors to subvert patriarchal ideology within their text; however, Atwood creates a society which distorts Biblical truths in order to hide its larger political purposes as “religious” thus revealing the fallacies within the original ideology.

Even though fairy tales perpetuate oppression of women in marriage, they do not reveal the source from which the patriarchal ideology originated. The culture conditions children from a young age to view marriage as the ultimate ideal; and therefore, “through the process of falling in love she becomes a woman who is sexually and culturally complying. To be ‘feminine’ is to accept the codes of a patriarchal monogamous situation” (Bagchi 33).

Religion uses Biblical passages to confine women to specific roles within society. Fundamentally, patriarchal ideology is rooted within the bible and religious belief. Atwood constructs a new society to reveal fallacies within society rather than incorporating traditional feminist means of subverting ideology within their text. Atwood creates a society based on reproduction and false interpretation of religious text; consequently:

Gilead is also a distinctive dystopia. Facing plagues and ecological crises that caused widespread sterility, the founders of Gilead generated a right-wing fundamentalist reading of the Bible, grafted it onto patriarchal attitudes, and imposed it throughout society. Gilead is devoted to reproduction-white, Christian, misogynist, stratified, reproduction. (Stillman 71)

The sign of red within the text indicates the sole purpose of women within this newly constructed society. Atwood reveals, “everything except the wings around my face is red; the color of blood, which defines us” (Atwood 8). For the handmaids, red symbolizes fertility, conception, and lack of purity. Atwood subverts the traditional associations with red which is the transgressive female character. Women literally wear the color which represents their function within society. The red they wear defines them within the culture; however, it is a symbol of honor within the patriarchal society. Women are fulfilling their purpose and function within society.

Ironically, prior to the new civilization, women were objectified by men. They possessed complete and total autonomy; consequently, this allowed rape, porn, abortions, and other means of objectifying women to increase. Atwood explicates, “these women could be undone; or not. They seemed to be able to choose, then. We were a society dying, said Aunt Lydia, of too much choice” (Atwood 25). Women previously were considered to be transgressive; however, now that they have “religious” purposes they are confined to wearing red. The new society fractures the roles of women in order to confine them to their function within society. Atwood constructs a reversal to ancient traditions

which constricts women to the purpose of wife and mother; however, even wife and mother are separated within the new society. Atwood highlights the consequences of radical feminism through the construction of this new society.

Atwood incorporates distorted biblical references to explore how patriarchy stems from religious ideology and perpetuates the oppression of women more significantly than fairy tales. Atwood reveals how the church “isn’t used anymore, except as a museum” (Atwood 31). The religious practices represent a foundation on which to construct the new society; however, it holds no real significance other than confining and controlling women. Offred reflects, “It’s the usual story, the usual stories” (Atwood 88). The Bible represents an instrument which allows the men to control the women; however, even the women recognize the distortion of bible references when she states, “*Blessed are the silent*. I knew they made that up, I knew it was wrong” (Atwood 89). The patriarchal society attempts to control women through the misrepresentation of bible passages.

In addition to her religious deviance, Anne was believed to have been sexually transgressive. There is a connection between child-bearing, or the perversion of the unborn child, as a consequence of female transgressiveness and the female religious dissent. Politics pervert and distort religion and spirituality in order to meet their own purpose. Critics explore the discourse between female bodies, spirituality, and eroticism in American history with regards to Anne Hutchinson and within the fictional, radical context of Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*. By using a historical context, critics can compare the discourse of 1600’s view on the female body and its relation to the spirituality while comparing it to a modern, even futuristic, context which explores the consequences of radical feminism and reverting to past cultural constructions. *The Handmaid’s Tale* takes historical gendered sex and religious association to its logical, oppressive conclusion.

In conclusion, Atwood reveals the consequences of radical feminism within her text. Critical examinations of the writings about Anne Hutchinson and by Atwood allow critics to draw conclu-

sions about the discourse surrounding female bodies, spirituality, and eroticism throughout American history. The discourse, a connection between religious deviance and allegations of sexual deviance, begins with the first woman, Eve, traces to Queen Jezebel, continues through the Puritan community and into future societies. Religion indoctrinates women with a belief system that establishes a gender-based hierarchy. Feminists believe women are oppressed within patriarchal society; however, through exemplifying the extreme conclusion of feminism, Atwood reveals the fallacies within the original ideology. Atwood illustrates, “you wanted a woman’s culture. Well, there is one. It isn’t what you meant, but it exists. Be thankful for small mercies” (Atwood 127). Traditional feminists’ texts highlight the oppression of women by subverting cultural expectations; however, Atwood illuminates the consequences of radical feminism by constructing a new society.

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III.

SEX AND
RELIGION
IN LITERATURE

GOBLIN MARKET

AMIE HENDRIX

Christina Rossetti, author of *Goblin Market*, constructs the poem as a Christian allegory, but conceals deeper concepts of spirituality and sexuality in its meaning. Since the Age of Victoria, the poem has been read as a children's fable speaking of withstanding temptation of things that are evil; however, it has recently been recognized as far more appropriate for adults considering the explicit sexual encounters within it. Rossetti uses goblin men to illustrate the evil antagonists who are the tempters, and two sisters, Laura and Lizzie, as the protagonists who are the tempted. One sister falls, while the other remains steadfast in times of temptation. The poem, allegedly a fable of morality for children, exposes more than just the simple plot of good versus evil. Though it seems obvious that Laura is the Eve character, and Lizzie is the Christ character, Rossetti complicates this idea by intertwining the girls' spirituality with the most explicit sexual acts such as lesbianism, incest, and bestiality. This suggestion not only affects the characters in the poem, but also questions the absolute validity that Eve is a whoring sinner, and Christ is the perfect sacrifice. Rossetti writes a poem for little children and women, indoctrinating them towards examining the maternal side of Christ's love, as well as homo-erotic relationships being the salvation of those in sexual and spiritual turmoil. Rossetti begins with a simple fable, manipulates it to make it an acceptable Christian allegory, and then complicates her characters to subtly interlace the sexuality and spirituality within them.

Rossetti illustrates a prominent concern for the liberation of the female body. During the nineteenth century, when Rossetti began writing, society was dominated by patriarchal rule and casted women as tools to pleasure and care for men. Women were under constant prejudice from men, and as a result, often became prisoners to their own society. In *Goblin Market*, she uses two

sisters to illustrate her strive for freedom of women. Through her fable, Rossetti illustrates the trials and temptations that are available to women in society, such as men offering sexual fulfillment, and the fatal effects they may have. Beginning in her childhood, Rossetti's writings create from an inner struggle she had against the temptations of society that constantly asphyxiated. Religion played a major role in defining the social construction of what a "Godly" relationship meant. It was believed that the only acceptable relationship, ordained by God, was a marriage between a male and a female, which focused on pleasing the powerful patriarch of the family, the husband. Rossetti's purpose for writing such stories as *Goblin Market* is to enlighten women about the unfair, gender hierarchy and encourage them to abandon the laws of a patriarchal society and cling to each other for help, strength, and support because through a maternally led society, salvation is at hand, both spiritually and sexually. This was illustrated not only in her writing, but also in her personal life. She often went to Highgate, a place for fallen women, such as adulteresses and prostitutes. Righteous women often went there to give instruction and comfort to the fallen. Rossetti gave instruction, but not the typical guidance towards embracing a spiritual society led by patriarchs. Instead, she encouraged women to turn towards each other in order to experience true liberation, spiritually and sexually. She often spoke about the maternal characteristics, such as comfort and support, and pointed out that males of Victorian society ignored that part of Christ. She argued that women had to find that part of Christ and embrace it with each other. Most critics believe that *Goblin Market* was written for the women of Highgate, and all of the women of Victorian society, to show them how to literally embrace the maternal characteristics of Christ; and to argue that embracing these instincts, though homosexual and incestuous, was more liberating than following the socially constructed roles of females. She does this by creating a parallel between Christ and Eve and turns the men of society into goblin prostitutes, disfigured and grotesque.

When the goblin men try to prostitute their fruits to Laura and Lizzie, Rossetti couples the scene with the original fall of Eve in the garden. She begins with the goblins trying to sell them fruit and describes the fruit as seductive,

Apples and quinces, lemons and oranges, plump unpecked cherries- melons and raspberries, bloom-down-cheeked peaches, swart-headed mulberries, wild free- born cranberries, crab-apples, dewberries, pine-apples, blackberries, apricots, strawberries-- all ripe together in summer weather--Our grapes fresh from the vine, pomegranates full and fine, dates and sharp bullaces, rare pears and greengages, damsons and bilberries, taste them and try: currants and gooseberries, bright-fire-like barberries, figs to fill your mouth, citrons from the south, sweet to tongue and sound to eye. Come buy, come buy! (Rossetti 20-31)

There are obvious sexual innuendos with men selling fruit that are “Full, fine, will fill your mouth, sweet to the tongue and sound to the eye,” meaning that their fruits are good to look on and pleasing to eat (65). Rossetti chooses the word, “Curious” to describe Laura when looking on the goblin men and their fruits (Rossetti 69). This implies that she has a yearning to know more about these little men and from where their delectable fruits came. Eve has a similar view of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The serpent tempts her by offering her knowledge, “In the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). Being the first Biblical connection Rossetti makes, she begins to change the story from the very beginning.

Though she strongly incorporates the character of Eve in Laura, Rossetti completely dismisses Adam’s character. Instead, she puts Lizzie as Laura’s counterpart, which makes two significant changes to the traditional Bible story. First, she does not give Laura, or Eve, a male partner. By having Lizzie as the only other person there, it foreshadows the possible incestuous, homosexual relationship

between the two. Secondly, it implies that Laura, or Eve, was not guilty of causing any others to fall, but only herself. This goes against all traditional depictions of Eve up to this point in Literature. The only males that are present within the entire fairytale are the goblin men. These merchants are evil sellers of a potent fruit which target young virgins as their customers. Not only does this speak to the dangerous marketing of male sexuality, but it also portrays men in an animalistic way.

Rossetti also connects the goblin men and the serpent in the garden by describing the men as animals. As Laura watches them come towards her, she wonders at them, "One had a cat's face, one whisk'd a tail, one tramp'd at a rat's pace, one crawl'd like a snail, one like a wombat prowl'd obtuse and furry, one like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry (Rossetti 71-76). Rossetti did not simply want to create her goblins to be men, but she made them all the more curious and evil by giving them animalistic features. The fact that only parts of them were animalistic, and other parts were human, gives the impression that these creatures were actually men; however, men distorted and unformed in both human and animal aspects. The Bible describes the serpent as the most "Subtile than any beast of the field" (Genesis 3:1). The word subtile means rare or unthinkable. This animal would have certainly drawn Eve's attention and cause her to wonder at him, much like how the goblin's attracted Laura.

Rossetti follows the traditional fairytale plot by incorporating the motif of "Wandering off the path" as seen in Red Riding Hood and other ancient fairytales. She does this by causing Laura's curiosity to distract from the right thing, and makes her crave the goblin's lavish fruit. Laura is seduced by these supposedly gentle creatures, "The cat-faced purr'd, the rat-paced spoke a word of welcome, and the snail-paced even was heard; one parrot-voiced and jolly cried 'Pretty Goblin' still for 'Pretty Polly!' One whistled like a bird" (109-114). Laura makes the mistake of falling to their temptations, much like Eve did in the garden, and exchanging something precious for the fruit. Though Eve exchanged her innocence literally, Laura exchanges her sexual innocence. A lock

of golden hair has been a symbol of virginity for centuries, and Laura willingly exchanges it for the goblins' fruit. Later in the poem, Lizzie "Tosses out her silver penny" to try to buy the fruit as the antidote to save Laura's life (Rossetti 367). Mendoza comments on this action and compares the exchange between Laura and the goblins and Lizzie and the goblins. He proposes that, "If Lizzie's coin seems to afford her both the ability to fend off the goblins' violence as well as consumer power in the face of those merchant men's mysterious terms of purchase, then the manner of how it does so is at the heart of the larger questions of economic and sexual agency" (914). The goblins mock at her precious penny while they beg for Laura's golden lock, clearly expressing the contrasting value and worth of the silver and gold. Laura's virginity was much more valuable to the goblins than Lizzie's money. By giving Laura blonde hair, and implying that it is a symbol of her virginity, Rossetti follows the traditional use of blonde hair in fairytales as "Enduring associations with beauty, love, nubility, erotic attraction, value, fertility, and the luminosity of it being the traditional color of a virgin's hair" (Warner 365). The golden hair of a young maid is quintessential in fairytales throughout history. This makes Rossetti's poem an even more erotic fairytale because following this scene of exchange is the explicit sexual interaction between Laura and the goblins. The silver coin is also Biblical symbolism and a foreshadowing of the sacrifice Lizzie will make. Judas, the betrayer, asks the chief priests, "What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver" (Matthew 26:15). The symbolism of the trading of the silver for the Holy Christ is seen here with Lizzie trying to buy the antidote for her sister; however, she becomes a sacrifice when the goblins do not accept her silver.

Rossetti complicates her perfect Christ character and her flawed Eve character when she intertwines the two sisters. By doing this, she draws a connection between the two, implying that a perfect Christ may be flawed, or the fallen Eve may have been justified. Lizzie runs home after Laura exchanges good with the goblin men, and waits for her at the gate, referring to the Biblical, prodigal

son motif. Lizzie upbraids her sister for staying out so late, and Laura hushes her and brags about the wonderful feast she has just devoured. That night, Laura and Lizzie sleep together: “Golden head by golden head, like two pigeons in one nest folded in each other's wings they lay down, in their curtained bed... Not a bat flapped to and fro round their rest: Cheek to cheek and breast to breast locked together in one nest” (Rossetti 184-187, 195-198). On this quiet night, the two sisters lie silently next to each other. Rossetti places great significance on this scene when she asked her brother, Dante Rossetti, to draw a picture of the scene and make it her book cover (Rossetti *Laura and Lizzie*). This scene goes against all common fairytale, biblical, and at the time, sexual beliefs and practices. Sutphin comments that Laura is “One of the few fallen women to survive in Victorian literature” (14). This observation is correct because usually the femme fatale, or the rebellious female character, is usually a fatal force to herself or to anyone close to her. This is true even in fairytales, remembering Little Red Riding Hood and Goldilocks, who were both devoured when they wandered off the path. However, Rossetti does not kill Laura or Lizzie. She does mention a woman named Jeanie, who is killed from her devouring of the fruit. Though Laura clearly parallels a femme fatale, Lizzie, the righteous Christ character, doubles her. This is extremely problematic because it not only offends Lizzie as a character, but offends Christ as the perfect sacrifice. They are lying next to each other in one bed. This bed is not just a bed in a room, but it is curtained. The mentioning of a curtain implies a curtain that it exists to cover something. It could be covering the light outside, it could be covering their view of the outside so they cannot see the goblins at night, or it could be covering something on the inside. The girls intertwined sleeping position suggests a sexual attraction and comfort towards each other. Rossetti herself struggled with her unacceptable sexual desires towards men and women. Waldman argues that this part of the poem is, “A revolt against its restrictions on her desire. To the extent to which this set of images is felt to be restrictive, representations of death reach toward a space of the free play of desire beyond sexual roles and social limits” (537). Rossetti

felt that since extra-marital sex with a man was ungodly, and sex at all with a woman was forbidden, that sex within the family was a reasonable option in releasing one's desires. There is no harm done to the girls for participating in this sexual act with each other. By making Lizzie involved in the act, she even suggests that it was a godly and acceptable thing to do because it was only used for the necessity of not sinning with the goblin men. This intra-familial desire for each other was not a sin and Rossetti does not comment on its incestuous content, but rather uses it as a defense mechanism against all the other unsafe sex that was being offered to the girls. However, the fact that the sinner and the pure are entangled with each other imposes guilt on Lizzie in some way, whether by association, her failure to stop Laura, or by her own hidden sins. Mermin furthers this idea by suggesting, "The two sisters are a part of one" (250). This means that both sisters have the same sexual desires, and that both sisters are guilty for Laura's fall. After all, Lizzie covered her ears and ran home. She failed at stopping Laura from doing the wrong thing. This makes her partially responsible for Laura's sin, which complicates the picture of a perfect and all mighty Christ figure. It also suggests that Christ had sexual desires as well towards women and men.

After Laura ate the fruit, she returned home with a craving, arguing that she is still unfulfilled after she has eaten the goblins' fruit. She tells Lizzie, "I ate and ate my fill, yet my mouth waters still; to-morrow night I will buy more' and kissed her" (165-168). This suggests that she has become addicted to having sex with males and eating their fruit, particularly goblin's fruit. She kisses Lizzie, which also implies that though sleeping with her sister may fulfill some of her sexual desires; sex with men soothes her momentary cravings. This implies that sex with men is preferred as opposed to sex with a woman; however, even sex with men leaves women unfulfilled and wanting more.

Rossetti attacks Laura's beauty as punishment for eating the goblin men's fruit. This scene opposes the traditional fairytale plot because in fairytales, the princess never has her beauty taken away from her. Though she may die, she is always pictured as being

beautiful in death. Seen particularly in *Sleeping Beauty*, where she looks so beautiful, it causes the prince to kiss her and bring her back to life. Rossetti writes, "Must she then buy no more such dainty fruit? Must she no more such succous pasture find, gone deaf and blind? Her tree of life drooped from the root... her hair grew thin and gray; she dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn to swift decay, and burn her fire away" (257-260, 277-280). Rossetti first causes Laura to lose her sight and hearing. This prevents her from satisfying her craving of more fruit from the goblin men. Without the fruit, she begins to wither slowly away and becomes old and gray. She has become an "Old maid" wanting sex but being unable to get it. The goblin men do not call to her anymore because she has sold her virginity. She alike could not find them because she could not see them and she could not listen for their cries to lead her in the right direction. She has literally sucked the life out of herself and will die unless she eats the antidote, the forbidden fruit. If she cannot get the antidote, then Rossetti said that she will become like Jeanie, "In her grave, who should have been a bride; but who for joys brides hope to have fell sick and died" (312-315). The joys mentioned are acceptable sex between a husband and wife. It was the belief of the time that sex would be better and more enjoyable if practiced by a husband and wife because that was ordained by God, as opposed to any other type of sex. Laura would die craving sex with a man, but not being able to get it from the goblins or from a husband because they would know she was not a virgin because of her elderly condition. Thus, Lizzie tries to save her sister's life. Rappoport argues, "Rossetti's relationship to the Anglican sisterhood movement has influenced many interpretations of "Goblin Market" (Rappoport 854). In the Anglican Church, sisters were bonded deeper than just biologically, but on the spiritual and physical level as well; therefore, making it less of a crime to sleep with a sister, as opposed to sleeping with another woman or a man. It also explains Lizzie's sacrifice she makes for Laura, a sacrifice that is both sexual and spiritual.

Rossetti presents the rape of Lizzie as Christ sacrificing himself on the cross; however, she sexualizes the instance to suggest rape.

Lizzie goes to try to buy some fruit from the men in order to save Laura. When the goblin men see her, they first try to tempt her by seduction and gentleness as they did with her sister, but when she refuses to eat, they rape her,

Laughed every goblin when they spied her peeping; came towards her hobbling, flying, running, leaping, puffing and blowing, chuckling, clapping, crowing, clucking and gobbling, mopping and mowing, full of airs and graces, pulling wry faces, demure grimaces, cat-like and rat-like, ratel and wombat-like, snail-paced in a hurry, parrot-voiced and whistler, helter-skelter, hurry-skurry, chattering like magpies, fluttering like pigeons, gliding like fishes, -- hugged her and kissed her; squeezed and caressed her; stretched up their dishes, panniers and plates: "Look at our apples russet and dun, bob at our cherries bite at our peaches, citrons and dates, grapes for the asking, pears red with basking out in the sun, plums on their twigs; pluck them and suck them, pomegranates, figs" ... "Thank you," said Lizzie; "But one waits at home alone for me: so, without further parleying, if you will not sell me any of your fruits though much and many, give me back my silver penny I tossed you for a fee." They began to scratch their pates, no longer agging, purring, but visibly demurring, grunting and snarling. One called her proud, Cross-grained, uncivil; their tones waxed loud, their looks were evil. Lashing their tails they trod and hustled her, elbowed and jostled her, clawed with their nails, barking, mewing, hissing, mocking, tore her gown and soiled her stocking, twitched her hair out by the roots, stamped upon her tender feet, held her hands and squeezed their fruits against her mouth to make her eat. (Rossetti 329-362, 383-407)

This is an extremely violent scene, one that sets this fairytale poem apart from a child's fable and makes it more appropriate for adult reading. Kooistra supports this theory when she writes, "Christina Rossetti's poem offers a fascinating study in the poli-

tics of audience formation, for *Goblin Market* crossed all these boundaries from the outset: it was written for adults; it used the form of the children's fairy tale; and it was about sex" (182). The most controversial point Rossetti makes is causing the goblins to be animalistic in their proposition and forcible actions towards Lizzie. Not only did Lizzie get raped by male animals, but Rossetti is arguing that Christ did as well, since females were neither allowed to be soldiers or government leaders. The Gospel of John reads, "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water... They shall look on him whom they pierced" (19:34, 37). A spear is a pointed, phallic symbol that enters Jesus' side and is the final wound that Jesus receives. Though there is no mention of animalistic behavior, the aspect of rape is evident; rape committed by a homosexual male, as there were no female soldiers in the Roman army. By the soldiers looking on Christ after he was dead implies the pleasure the men got from piercing Christ. Rossetti draws the connection between the rape of Christ and the rape of Lizzie by incorporating rape. Though Christ's rape has obvious penetration of the skin, Lizzie was penetrated in her mouth and her vagina. It was obvious that Lizzie did not want to eat the goblin's fruit, though it was beautiful; however, they forced it into her mouth and made her eat it.

The difference between Laura's and Lizzie's sexual encounters is that Laura willingly went to them and traded her virginity for their fruits. Lizzie intended on buying their fruits with money and not losing her virginity. Her intentions were pure, though her desires were still there. Romans also often crucified men naked; Lizzie also has her dress torn. Her stockings being soiled is also a symbol for a girl losing her virginity in Victorian literature. That is the first penetration that happens. The second penetration takes place when they force their fruits into her mouth, clearly oral rape.

When Lizzie is released and allowed to return home, Rossetti makes the saving of Laura's life sexual as well. When Lizzie returns, she cries out to Laura:

“Laura, up in the garden, did you miss me? Come and kiss me. Never mind my bruises, hug me, kiss me, suck my juices squeezed from goblin fruits for you, goblin pulp and goblin dew. Eat me, drink me, love me; Laura, make much of me: for your sake I have braved the glen and had to do with goblin merchant men.” She clung about her sister, kissed and kissed and kissed her: Tears once again refreshed her shrunken eyes, dropping like rain after long sultry drouth; shaking with aguish fear, and pain, she kissed and kissed her with a hungry mouth. (Rossetti 464-474, 485-492)

This final salvation takes place in the garden, a connection to the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. Lizzie becomes the tree to save Laura's life. She insists that Laura immediately begin licking and kissing her so that she can drink the juices of the fruit off of her own body. Hill argues that “The nature of Rossetti's central image of the erotic body as the vehicle for salvation—an image that is at once profoundly spiritual and profoundly erotic—can only be understood through an appreciation of the Anglo-Catholic doctrine of the Holy Eucharist” (456). The Holy Eucharist, also known as the Lord's Supper, is a saving meal that the disciples ate the night of Christ's crucifixion. This meal has been practiced for centuries by all types of religious denominations. The Catholics, in particular, have this meal every church service, and believe that their unleavened bread and wine actually becomes the body and blood of Jesus Christ. This is important because if they are eating the body and blood of Christ, they are putting it into their mouths, much like Laura drinks and eats the juices off of Lizzie's body. This holds the underlying theme of eroticism, which Rossetti believes is necessary in salvation. Salvation occurs when one loves Christ in every way and acknowledges the sacrifice that has been made. By using this scene, Rossetti shows that she believes that one must love Christ spiritually and sexually to obtain the full blessings of salvation. She connects two loves, Eros and Agape, Eros meaning erotic and agape meaning spiritually fulfilling love. These loves are known to be set apart from each other by the reli-

gious, and Rossetti struggled with this because she felt that Agape love could not be reached without Eros love. By using the two sisters, involved in an incestuous and homosexual relationship, she illustrates her belief that to love someone fully, required for sacrifice and salvation, then one must love both the spiritual and sexual aspects of the other. She intertwines the two loves to make it clear to women that liberation would come by embracing and supporting each other, independently from patriarchal rules, even if it means entering a homoerotic and incestuous relationship that is founded on the maternal traits of Christ.

Rossetti does end the poem with the classic fairytale and Biblical ending to a righteous life. Rossetti reaches complete closure with the conclusion of her poem,

Days, weeks, months, years afterwards, when both were wives
with children of/ their own; their mother-hearts beset with
ears, their lives bound up in tender lives;/ Laura would call
the little ones and tell them of her early prime, would talk
about/ the haunted glen, the wicked, quaint fruit-merchant
men, their fruits like honey to/ the throat, but poison in the
blood; would tell them how her sister stood in deadly/ peril
to do her good, and win the fiery antidote. (Rossetti 543-559)

The typical fairytale ending, when the couples are married and have children is seen here. Though typical, this ending happens only after there has been a temptation, a fall, a sacrifice, and salvation. Rossetti implies that once a female has reached complete sexual and spiritual liberation, as well as fulfillment, then it might be appropriate for her to enter back into society as a wife and mother. Rossetti does not altogether curse husband/wife relationships, but rather, argues that females should focus on their own needs and wants first. While focusing on themselves, they should turn to women to fulfill them, because men can turn them into useless, old women and eventually kill them, if a woman enters into a marriage unfulfilled. Though Rossetti embraces marriage in her conclusions, she still has the sisters living as neighbors of

each other. This implies that Rossetti feels that women should still depend on each other for comfort, encouragement and support after entering into a marriage with a man. This helps in the raising of children - the goblin men still linger as a danger, not to the sisters who are now wives, but to their innocent children who are vulnerable to the goblins' fruits. They warn their children by telling them the story of their experiences with the fruit. This scene shows how the mothers try to protect their children's sexual innocence from being perverted by the evil goblins and their tempting fruits. Laura also calls attention to Lizzie's charity in saving her life. Vejvoda suggests that this is a picture of the relationship between chastity and charity, "A sequence of virtues underneath the general virtue of 'charity': first comes self-love ('chastity'), and then comes love for others, or 'charity'" (717). This means that Lizzie had enough love for herself, as an innocent virgin, and for herself, that she was able to sacrifice herself in order to save her sister, which is the deepest kind of love—charity. The Greeks called this type of love agape love, which most people associate with Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Charity is a part of agape love, which Lizzie possessed.

Critics who have studied this poem rely strongly on the context of Rossetti's life. She was a part of the Anglican Church and Sisterhood, she helped fallen women at the penitentiary at Highgate, she struggled with her own erotic sexuality with extramarital sex, lesbianism, and bestiality, and became part of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which was almost impossible as she was a woman. Boos comments on this fact that, "Her sense of her vocation, her literary activities, important friendships and influences, her relationship with her mother and sister, and the influence and interference of her brothers in her career" implying that all of these different aspects of her life strongly affected what she wrote (13). This exposes her methodology in *Goblin Market*. The allegory, highly radicalized, and went against everything society taught her at the time. From a children's fairytale and an Adult poem, it broke the common traditions of these literary motifs and offered up a new type of poetry, an eroticized poetry. Though full

of sexual innuendos, the spiritual is still present, though fallen as well. The common theme of the perfect Christ transforms to a partially guilty sister saving her fallen sister's life. Rossetti took a chance to make a subtle statement about her beliefs and embraced critical interpretations of literature. She took an uncomplicated tale and molded it into a controversial piece of work dealing with spirituality, desire, sacrifice, and purity, which was both a risk to her societal persona and a sacrifice of her privacy to the world.

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**A POETIC ENGAGEMENT WITH GOD:
WHITMAN AND DICKINSON'S
CONSTRUCTION OF THE SELF**

KIMBERLY SMITH

The poetry of Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson is both passionate and intensely self-reflexive. The post-Puritan religious environment of the 1860s imposed upon the poetry of both individuals, influencing constructions of the self through poetic narrative. I argue that the sexual desire present in their poetry mediates the construction of the self through language; their desire drives the search for fulfillment of the reflexive self and the poetic self engages with God through the text, evidence of literature's elevation to sacred status in the Romantic period. Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson were liminal poets in their lifetime—he as a homosexual and she as an unmarried recluse. Whitman's "Song of Myself" as well as Dickinson's "Wild Nights," "Exhilaration is Within," and "Who is it seeks my Pillow Nights" all contain shifting personae, allusions to God, which show the construction of the self through these shifts and sexual relations with the spirit. The textual rebellion present in the poetry of Whitman and Dickinson is a departure from the prescribed heterosexual self of the nineteenth century; they attempt to know God by knowing themselves and discover selves that exist apart from mainstream America which negotiate their sexual desire through a poetic engagement with God or the spiritual self. The articulation of sexual desire through poetry reads as an attempt to fill the lack of spiritual and sexual satisfaction denied to both authors because of their marginal status within their own society.

Whitman's and Dickinson's status as liminal poets during the Romantic era presupposes that their writing would be different somehow from the majority of the poetry published during the 1860s. The busting open of the hymnal format is evident in Dick-

inson's lack of meter and in Whitman's extremely lengthy poetic line; their knowledge of the Puritanical hymn and the accepted forms of poetry coupled with their own writing suggest their role in the paradigm shift from sacred to secular during their lifetime. Lawrence Buell discusses the inversion of the sacred and the secular, stating that it occurs upon the claim that "scripture is only a form of poesis, which needs to be articulated anew for each age. A number of Anglo-American writers, including Emerson, took the "modern" position that the poet has a right, indeed a duty, to reconstruct mythology for himself and his era" (2). Looking at scripture as a form of poesis dictates that scripture is subjective and because of historical paradigm shifts, it is fitting that the poetry of the Romantic era would reflect the negotiation of the paradigm shift. Whitman and Dickinson wrote prolifically, although Dickinson's body of work was not published correctly until the 1950s, and both poets wrote in negotiation of this paradigm shift from sacred to secular. These negotiations show that the construction of the self is an inherent part of poesis whether scriptural or poetic.

Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" is an example of textual rebellion, showing a fleshified deity:

I am satisfied...I see, dance, laugh, sing; /As God comes a
loving bedfellow and sleeps at my side all night/and close
on the peep of day, /And leaves for me baskets covered with
white towels and bulging the house/with their plenty, /Shall
I postpone my acceptance and realization and scream at my
eyes, /That they turn from gazing after and down the road,
/And forthwith cipher and show me to a cent[.] (51-5)

His poetic self "is satisfied" and I argue that this is only possible within the realm of language, not only because of Whitman's homosexuality but also because of what his portrayal of God reveals. God as an actual "bedfellow" represents a spirit made flesh and Whitman uses this "human" spirit's visit to discuss the construction of himself as a poet. He questions if he should "postpone" the acceptance of himself and he uses the term "cipher,"

suggesting that he is a kind of cryptograph that must be deciphered and parceled out into language. The visit of the Holy Bedfellow appears to be a catalyst for an introverted search for the self; Whitman's questioning of himself takes place within his poetry and his many revisions suggest that he revised his conception of himself and of what constitutes the concept of the self. Jimmie Killingsworth writes that Whitman "felt that social and literary convention had placed an undue emphasis on the spiritual and emotional aspects of love. He sought to return physical love to its proper place. He never intended to deny the essential distinction between body and soul." (11). The return of physical love to language is an invasion of the realm of poesis that had been previously dominated by scripture and with the paradigm shift of the Romantic period was made possible. "Song of Myself" is deeply concerned with the creation of the poetic self, a construction built in the face of socio-cultural pressures, which include religion. Whitman's focus on the physicality of God brings us to the shift of sacred to secular; if God can possess a physical body (to make love with), then is it not possible that Whitman/the poet can possess a spiritual body that would "know" God in a similar fashion? The search for a literal and a metaphysical knowledge of God is mediated through the writing of both poets; it is the search itself that creates the knowledge of God because both Whitman and Dickinson find God in their poetic selves.

Emily Dickinson's "Who is it seeks my Pillow Nights?" is evidence of the same poetic problem; the persona struggles with her own conscience and her relationship to God. Dickinson writes: "'All' Rogues 'shall have their part in' what—/The Phosphorus of God-", where "Phosphorus" is read as a kind of beacon directing the narrator of the poem toward a relationship with God (7-8). The concepts of a Holy Bedfellow and a beacon toward this same type of relationship with God are both transcendental in nature and in opposition to the heteronormative nature of American religion. Dickinson and Whitman can both be classified as "queer" and "transcendental" poets on the grounds that "to be queer is to create self and audience by recodifying what

it means to be a self and to be transcendental is to individually and intuitively surmount the material, the contemporaneous, the everyday (Buckley 27). Dickinson and Whitman literally “surmount the material” with their poetic discussions of God as a Holy Bedfellow and beacon of direction. The creation of the self through poetry and the engagement of that self with God in the form of a textual relationship imply a physical knowledge of a God who possesses no physical body.

Redefining God as having a body is a mirror image of the poets’ redefinition of themselves as well as transcending the “everyday” within language, which creates a bridge between the secular paradigm of the 1860s and the sacred God through redefinition. The continuous creation of the self through poesis requires the constant integration of parts of the self and the multiplicity of personae used by Whitman and Dickinson allow the diaphanous knowledge to become integrated upon a reading of their poetry.

The shifting personae of Whitman and Dickinson’s poetry are a manifestation of the fractured self—fractured because it is undergoing the process of construction. The many narrators, male and female, used by both poets indicates that their textual selves are undefined in terms of the normative religious beliefs that were still present in the 1860s and that are problematized by the paradigm shift into the secular and the de-centering of the Bible as the most important Western literary text. The narrator of Dickinson’s “Wild Nights” is male; he discusses his futile desires—“Might I but moor—tonight—/In thee!” (11-2). Whitman’s poetic sojourn as the reclusive woman who watches the male bathers is interesting in terms of her invisible transformation into the extra bather but also how Whitman portrays this transformation: “An unseen hand also passed over their bodies, /It descended tremblingly from their temples and ribs. / [...] They do not know who puffs and declines with pendant and bending arch, /They do not think whom they souse with spray” (205-10). Although we believe we are witnessing the wishful actions of the circumscribed female bather, they are portrayed in a spiritual manner and harken back to Whitman’s previous lines: “And I know that the hand of God

is the elderhand of my own, /And I know that the spirit of God is the eldest brother of my own" (83-5). The invisible hand, although it belongs to Whitman's female persona, is also the invisible hand of Whitman and of God.

The multiplicity of narrators used by both poets is evidence of the anxiety present in the construction of the self, especially the poetic selves of these two marginalized poets. The sexual desires thinly veiled in "Wild Nights" and not so thinly veiled in "Song of Myself" suggest that these shifting personae delineate the uncertain nature of their sexual desires. Buckley writes: "What signifies the organs and acts of deviants and antisocial persons is threaded by Whitman's hermeneutic into a broader, more spiritual self. Whitman not only alters the syntagmatic relationships between desire and self; he also subverts the paradigmatic relationships between self and desire" (59-60). The discussion of "Whitman's hermeneutic" as mediation toward a different type of self is interesting, stating that Whitman created a new way of understanding knowledge in order to work with the knowledge of the self and of God gained through his poetry. Because of Whitman's focus on the body and how bodies dictate the actions of God and of his narrators, I argue that it is the self constructed through bodily juxtaposition with God that is the ultimate goal of Whitman's poetry. Dickinson, however, leaves the body out of her poetry and focuses more on an internal self-hood. Dickinson's poetic desire was to be the "author of her own identity and hers in an ongoing intimacy with the antisocial, the divine essence of self-knowledge" and it is this knowledge of the self that allows for knowledge of and a relationship with God (106).

"Who is it Seeks my Pillow Nights?" is answered with "Conscience," and "The Phosphorus of God," as well as implying a literal body seeking the narrator's pillow (597). The questioning narrator is inspected by her own conscience and by a separate entity. "Dickinson names two selves: the self and the other. This 'other' is consciousness, that awful internal stranger that she must repeatedly confront. Dickinson further polarizes the internal structure, for that other self is sexualized. He embodies the masculine, prepo-

tent force that must be at once wooed and denied” (Diehl 173). Using Diehl’s theory, the separate body delineated in the poem as the person literally seeking the narrator’s pillow is the “other” discussed as a male consciousness that is dealt with in two ways simultaneously. The duality suggests the anxiety of negotiating the poem as well as the sexual anxiety present in the negotiation of male and female. The masculine presence in the narrator’s bed juxtaposed against “The Phosphorus of God” correlates the literal seeker of the pillow with God; Dickinson also correlates the presence to the narrator’s own “Conscience,” showing that these three personae are facets of the same metaphysical/literal being.

Dickinson’s “Wild nights—Wild nights!” portrays a narrator seeking a kind of penetration and a wish for a search’s end as well as portraying a male persona as a facet of her poetic self. Her “poems strive not for the moment in nature that is new but a space beyond it which provides a retrospective vision on life—the freedom of evaluation after the event” (Diehl 166). “Wild nights” is an exploratory poem that revels in the “other,” masculine persona; and the freedom from the search Dickinson’s narrator seeks will only be gained from post-exploratory knowledge of all of the facets of the self: male, female, and metaphysical. The narrator is “Done with the Compass—/Done with the Chart! /Rowing in Eden—/ Ah—the Sea!” which demonstrates the lack of navigation. The narrator’s directionless search for a literal and metaphysical port shows the sexual frustration and anxiety, manifested in Dickinson’s poetic language. The multiple dashes of “Wild Nights,” the male narrator, and the free imagery of a “chartless” search portray a frustrated narrator who seeks fulfillment through knowledge and fulfillment through a possible physical liaison.

The possibility of a physical liaison with Christ in particular informs Dickinson’s poetry and the search for fulfillment from within the self is portrayed as the poetic goal in “Exhilaration—is within—.” “Exhilaration—is within—” juxtaposes imagery of wine and the soul as well as male stimulation to achieve a metaphor for the rising Christ via sexual stimulation mediated through religious offering (Dickinson 289). Dickinson’s narrator discusses the wine

“The Soul achieves—Herself,” described as “diviner” than the wine from outside of the narrator and also described as possibly being “set away/For Visitor—or Sacrament” (3-7). The narrator states, “Best you can/Exhale in offering,” as a way “to stimulate a Man” (Dickinson 9, 12). The “Man” discussed by Dickinson’s narrator appears to be a Christ figure, as evidenced through the imagery of wine and of sacred offerings.

The problem of “stimulation” is solved by the narrator in a personal and unique way, stating that “’Tis not of Holiday” to stimulate the Christ-figure—Dickinson’s narrator is pushing for a personal kind of worship and one that involves exploratory poetic personae as well as knowledge from “within” (8). “Dickinson’s poems face the barrier of mortality and confront Emerson’s challenge: ‘There is no outside, no inclosing wall, no circumference to us.... His only redress is forthwith to draw a circle outside of his antagonist’” (Diehl 166). Dickinson’s narrator draws a circle outside of her imagined “antagonist” and she draws it within herself, finding the ability to worship personally, uniquely, and sexually.

Reading these three poems together allows a view of Dickinson’s many narrators, all of whom are searching; the three personae all search for a greater knowledge through a physical connection. “The controlling image of poet as reader of the universe leads to his observing minute particulars, studying his relation to the text, finding what will suffice as an adequate symbol of the self” (Diehl 162). Emily Dickinson’s multiple personae, each representing a different facet of her poetic self questing for knowledge of the self through poetic language and as sense of sexual fulfillment from a male consciousness portrayed as a Christ figure, demonstrate the paradigm shift from sacred to secular as well as the frustration of a liminalized poet.

Whitman’s questioning narrator comes up with his own answers from within the text he is creating. Whitman’s search for fulfillment in knowledge of himself and through sexual activity that transcends humanity is portrayed in his worship:

If I worship any particular thing it shall be some of the spread
of my body;/Translucent mould of me it shall be you, / [...]
You my rich blood, your milky stream pale strippings of my
life; [...] Winds whose soft-tickling genitals rub against me it
shall be you, [...] Hands I have taken, face I have kissed, mortal
I have ever touched, /it shall be you. (Whitman 529-540)

Whitman equates his own body with a Christ figure, evident in his allusions to “blood, your milky stream,” mirroring the poetic tradition of portraying a sexual relationship with Christ through the use of his bodily fluids in poetry. The “soft-tickling genitals” of the “winds” mirror the invisible hand of God that takes part in the scene of the twenty-eight bathers; the embodiment of Christ is portrayed as engaging in sexual acts with Whitman’s narrator and also as the solitary subject of the narrator’s worship, although Christ is portrayed as an extension of the narrator’s body. Whitman refers to the Christ figure as “mortal I have ever touched,” equating Christ not only with the narrator’s body, but also with the bodies of the narrator’s multiple lovers, which reinforces the concept of a bodily and mortal Christ who can engage in sexual congress as well as engage with the poet metaphysically and forge a spiritual connection. “Seeking to undo the constitutive oppositions embedded in the undemocratic language of his culture, at the personal level Whitman was looking for the kind of unoppositional relationship that, as he said, was not in any previously published book” (Pollak 104-5). Whitman’s portrayal of the extremely multiplicitous relationship of his narrator to his body and to the body of Christ and others shows a breakdown of the “undemocratic” language he rebels against through poetry; the use of language to recreate the self and forge an overarching relationship with God through the sexual self reiterates the paradigm shift from sacred to secular through the sacred portrayal of multiple human bodies.

The paradigm shift from sacred to secular is negotiated in the poetry of Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson through their fractured personae which reveal multiple facets of their poetic selves. Their engagement with God through poetry is demonstrated

through the embodiment of their own desire and the Christ figure that their nature engages with physically. The articulation of sexual desire through poetry reads as an attempt to fill the lack of spiritual and sexual satisfaction denied to both authors because of their marginal status within their own society and this articulation is a result of their textual rebellion; both poets strove to create their own form of poesis which would allow them to engage with their true selves and their religious icons on a personal level and this could only be achieved poetically through the physicality of Christ and the subsequent sexual relationship portrayed by both poets.

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