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The Supernatural & The Fantastical

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Exploring the Spiritual

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Dear Reader,

I would like to first admit that I never thought I would be here, in this position, writing to you. This year is the fourth year of *The Rock Creek Review*. Before me, people I have looked up to, admired, and can proudly call friends have led and shared stories magnificently. Being the Managing Editor was no small task, thus making the pressure to carry on with brilliance stronger and more prevalent.

When Dr. Barry Devine and previous managing editor Kelsey Stanfield selected me for this position, I was in disbelief. My peers and their confidence encouraged me to carry on this journal with passion. My incredible team of Editors, Katherine Albright, Emily Garberich, Rowan Gill, Kelly Peterson, and Hazel Stone supported my determination and passion by indulging and allowing me to lead the team towards my image for this year's publication. As with major any project, instances happen and things go awry, but with their skills and brilliance, this publication is in your hands.

As you know, the chosen theme for this year was "The Supernatural and Fantastical" in literature. My entire life I have wanted to be beyond this world- and somewhere where the laws of nature didn't apply. I have always wanted to see more, do more, and be more than what this natural world guarantees us. However, through literature, I have been able to delve into these worlds and discover the supernatural and fantastical.

Despite being able to explore these worlds in literature, it always seemed to end when I closed the cover. As I have grown, I feel as though I have begun to observe divine intervention and otherworldly elements in my own life. I began to observe the wonder in nature that sometimes teetered into a curious universe. Because of literature, my world has changed and become brighter. I've experienced and felt a multitude of experiences because others wrote for which I am eternally grateful.

In this edition, I hope you find yourself exploring the supernatural and submerging in the wonder of literature with the divine submissions we received this year. Our essayists detailed and analyzed a multitude of literary works, each unique with its own beauty. While you are reading, take a moment to look beyond the natural world, something new might catch your eye.

Thank you for reading *The Rock Creek Review*.
Makenna Finnegan.

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Literary 'Fish Women': Reflections of Womanhood and Subversion of the Patriarchal Paradigm in Mermaid Figures

J.M. Ávila

The high, thrilling song of the Sirens will transfix him,
lolling there in their meadow, round them heaps of corpses
rotting away, rags of skin shriveling on their bones.
~ Homer, The Odyssey

The conceptualization of an entity that is half woman and half fish is one that has never been bound by geographic factors. In fact, mermaids, in their various theorized forms and terminologies, can be identified in mythologies from across the historical record. Their mythical figures contain attributes that highlight the state of a society's perceptions of femininity–and the consequences of leaving the female sphere in society uncontrolled.

From ancient Greek myths about sirens luring sailors with their captivating songs to drown them in the depths, to ancient Japanese views of ningyo as being bad omens who preceded events of mass carnage, fish women in literature have been manifestations of a society's fear of female deviation from their enforced roles. Women as a marginalized group within patriarchal-organized societies are controlled by what

they wear, what positions they can hold within their civilization, and their relationship to the men in their lives. On the occasions that women in ancient stories were depicted, the focus was always on her as a mother, a daughter, a sister, or a threat to a male character.

The deconstructed femininity of fish women—who inhabit both the world above water as well as the unknown depths of the sea—undoubtedly fueled the image of them as inherently sinister and dangerous to humanity. Within the stories of fish women, the feminine body transforms into an independent, solitary creature with no men to hold her accountable for her actions. She resists outside control or interference and consciously manipulates men's "carnal desires" to seduce and subsequently slaughter them.

For the greater part of history, it was men who wrote the stories of fish women. Anxieties over what bodily autonomy for women meant for men in a society—anxieties that become increasingly prevalent during times of war—can be seen in the way literary representations of mermaids act. In patriarchal nations, the idea of family stability, and by extension the regulation of women in the domestic sphere, used as a reflection of the overall stability of the state is common. After the Great War's end in 1918, the various cultural movements that swept the globe brought about a new era of "modern girls" who explored sexuality, economic independence, and the development of their social consciousness. Essentially, they adopted a lifestyle that aligned with the literary mentality of a siren: they enjoyed a newfound ability to invest in both the domestic and social spheres, breaking out of the box women were confined within. However, after the outbreak of the Second World War, much of the social progress women made was

perceived to be harmful to the victory of the state. Women became a population that was meant to reflect the welfare of the state. It is a concept quite similar to the literary image of mermaids as omens for battles—by domesticating the sirens, you eliminate the possibility of any revolutionary acts that upset the gender order of the patriarchal society.

The case throughout human history has been that women's bodies become a battlefield in which wars are fought. It has been argued by historians many times that rape during war is less about sexual desire and more about inflicting humiliation on women and their families (their male relationships in particular, who are often forced to witness the violence). Wartime sexual assault and rape have been accepted as an inevitable rule of war until very recently; after all, the labels of "crimes against humanity" and "war crimes" are brand new charges in the grand scope of historical record. This may explain one reason why women have latched onto the figure of the siren as an empowering creature. For men, the siren symbolizes the possibility of being sexually overpowered and killed—a reality that women have always considered to be a possibility for themselves. For women, a tail that transforms parts of their body that are brutalized by men, as well as one that gives them physical power over the inexperienced human legs thrashing in the water, opens up the possibility of transcending their social position. It would also mean an escape from the realities of war and genocidal rape that is often dismissed after a conflict ends.

Persephone Braham's analysis of sirens in the different regions of the world is extensive and is a cornerstone of folklore scholarship when it comes to the fish-female hybrid creatures. Braham details the fundamental elements of sirens as "...subversively

transcendent..." beings whose ability to control men with their enchanted songs intentionally shifts the power dynamics that are implicitly woven into a patriarchal society (Braham 2018). Furthermore, the overtly phallic representation of the tail covered in scales highlights the possibilities that sirens in literature tap into an inherently masculine well of power and influence, striking deeper fear in the men that may encounter them. It is the masculine horror and humiliation that comes with losing to a woman that enhances the effect; being killed by a fellow man in war is one thing, but being killed by a woman, who is socially expected to be subservient to you, is quite another.

John D. Swain touches upon the dynamics of power between sexes, and how the roles become reversed in literary depictions of sirens. "At once fish and human, the mermaid embodies and 'translates' the link between disparate and seemingly irreconcilable entities: the sea and land, the present and past, the dominated and the dominant..." (Swain 2009). The dominated woman transforms into the one who cradles the once dominant man's life between her fingertips—she decides what happens to him, how he lives and how he dies, just as men for centuries have been able to decide for women.

The damage that sirens embody for the masculine ego is one that reaches beyond simple fear of death and extends to the core of patriarchal values and ideologies in relation to women. As Boria Sax explains, "...the mermaid, a figure of primeval feminine power, is almost always viewed with intense ambivalence...[and] the mermaid is nearly always idealized" (Sax 2000). The mermaid is beautiful, seductive, and hypnotizing, and just like the sea, she can turn destructive and cruel within a moment.

A constant threat for sirens in literature always lingers under the surface of their scales: that a human will capture them, experiment on them, or tour them in shows for human audiences to gawk at. Their interactions with humankind are almost always on the defensive. They, like any other creature, value survival.

This threat is by no means limited to a fantastical scene: Saartjie Baartman was an African woman who was taken in 1810 and toured around Britain as an "anthropological freak." The proportions of her body were unlike those of Western women; her naked body was displayed for "sexual curiosity" to gawking European audiences who had never before seen the "savages" that their own empire colonized. She was the basis for caricatures of African women in imperial literature. Even in death, she could not escape the horrific practices against her bodily autonomy; her skeleton was removed, her brain and genitals were pickled, and these were displayed until 1985 (Lloyd 2011).

Ironically, during the same years and geographical location that Baartman was being subjected to violations against her body, *Wet Magic* by E. Nesbit was published. The plot revolves around young English children saving a trapped mermaid from her confinement in a circus and visiting her underwater kingdom. The story offers an alternate life that Baartman could have lived—if only she were a white mermaid in a tank instead of a Black African woman in a cage. Although, both share similar abominable conditions of being displayed for male voyeurs who devalue their existence until they are no different than a statue without a soul.

If mermaids were not mythological beings and were caught off the coast of England, would they be subjected to the same fate as Baartman? Would her tail be

butchered, preserved, and shown to audiences for a century after her death? Would the exhibitors exclaim, "here lies the savage, dangerous creature we tamed," like they did to Baartman?

Or would it depend on the color of her human skin? Perhaps pearly white would reflect the beauty of idealized sirens in literature, while darker flesh would be identified as the omen of evil or disaster. If she were in fact a man, would he have instead served as a diplomat between the two kingdoms of land and sea, instead of being strung up as a creature to dissect and defile?

There is an inherent dissolution of human-constructed ideas of femininity and gender when it comes to sirens in literature. The ocean is one of the most utilized environmental symbols in literary texts to reflect fluidity, the womb of the world, and the conflict between tranquility and chaos. In many global mythologies, nature is represented as a feminine being, and that includes the sea. Therefore, sailors who set out on voyages into the ocean were, in essence, placing themselves at the mercy of unknown, feminine power (Sax 2000). The sea provides "...a space in which [sirens] have complete freedom to exist on their own terms, not those dedicated by some more powerful other..." (Swain 2009). The oceans are as vast and as dangerous as space, which makes its environment as the principal domain for literary fish women uniquely significant. Humanity is not suited for existence within the sea, and fish women find immense comfort in this fact– it is a biome in which the power imbalance between masculine power and feminine power is wiped away and replaced with sheer survival.

The patriarchal image of women as the docile sex, the nurturing gender whose existence is limited to the domestic sphere of the household, does not exist in the sea.

Female sharks regularly eat male sharks that bother them. Octopus mothers die shortly after their offspring are born, nullifying the idea of nurturing or raising their children. Male seahorses carry eggs to birth when ready. Gender as a concept in an environment as hostile as the ocean would simply be unsustainable. Since part of the allure that sirens boast is their subversion from bipedal humans' social constructs, it is implicit that they are not held to the same gender standards as land-bound societies. This is certainly seen in some of the earlier iterations of sirens. They are as fluid in their movements as they are in perceptions of gender and morality. Living in an environment that balances on survival of the fittest morphs theories of morality fairly quickly.

Modern literature has begun to revive the image of fish women as hybrid creatures that are actively distanced from patriarchal society. For a time in literary history, mermaids became more of a romantic idea—especially when coupled with a forbidden love storyline that included a charming male human who entranced her. She begins to wish to shed her tail in order to be with him, stripping the subversiveness of her very existence to mold herself into the humanistic paradigm. Where her priority was once survival, the role of a wife suddenly takes precedence. The novel that marked a turning point in the global perspective on mermaids was *The Little Mermaid* by Hans Christian Andersen. This mermaid's dream is to inhibit the world of humanity, which is portrayed similarly to Plato's philosophical "divine ideal." It is the puzzle piece that the mermaid has apparently been missing her entire life, emphasizing the divisive notion that existence as two halves is not as meaningful as being a "complete being." The desire to be human fuels the mermaid, but the desire to be the wife of a human man remains at

the forefront of her mind. The only goal that may compete with that of matrimony is that of motherhood.

There are, however, modern creatives who consciously deviate from this narrative, aiming to create original ways of transposing modern and historical ideas of womanhood onto mythological or supernatural creatures. River Solomon's *The Deep* imagines a society of mermaids that descended and originated from unspeakable atrocities:

"During the greatest holocaust the world has ever known, pregnant America-bound African slaves were thrown overboard by the thousands during labor for being sick and disruptive cargo. Is it possible that they could have given birth at sea to babies that never needed air?" (Solomon 2019).

The Deep introduces a layer of race alongside gender when it comes to mermaids in literary works. This intersectional way of constructing the creatures provides a depth that is rarely explored. While in ancient Greek depictions of sirens, it is seen as a random act of manipulative violence when fish-women lure sailors to their death, *The Deep*'s sirens have a generational source of trauma that created the source of their motivations. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade was the most systemic form of dehumanization and prolonged exploitation of humans stolen from their homelands. The objectification of African women—as Baartman serves as an example of—did not end with the abolition of slavery. In fact, Baartman was showcased across Europe after slavery had "ended."

There are connections to be drawn between the mythological creatures and the experiences of enslaved African women as dehumanized to the point of being seen as a

separate species altogether. The figure of the mermaid once again becomes a refuge for abused and forgotten women in history; it is with great sorrow that the women, mothers, and sisters who jumped from slave ships into the waves did not get to carry out revenge in a new, hybrid form that gave them power over their captors. Instead, their bones make up the small fragments of shells that wash up onto shore. *The Deep* is an addition to the literary canon of sirens, not just because it contains fish-women, but because of its intricate weaving of sirens and themes such as colonization, generational memory, and female resistance in the face of genocide.

Girlhood within modern patriarchal societies is stained by oppressive standards of beauty and success. With the rise of mass media following the technological revolution, these are more prevalent than ever before. Young girls ask for corsets as holiday gifts, and older women spend any spare money on anti-wrinkle creams. This by no means marks the end of relevance for mermaids, their literary representations have simply shifted in order to better encapsulate the modern experiences of girls.

Chlorine by Jade Song is one literary example of the relationship between mermaids and modern feminine ideals. The protagonist, who seeks desperately to be the best swimmer on her team while being overwhelmed by the pressures of femininity, finds herself transforming into the creature she had always longed to be: a mermaid. Just as *The Deep* connects the experience of sirens to that of generational trauma after genocide, *Chlorine* explores how enticing the life of a fish-woman seems to a human girl who experiences body shaming, sexual assault, and the effects of developing self destructive behaviors because of it. The "transformation" into a siren is not pretty or

beautiful, but instead a grotesque, painful defense mechanism in order to escape the patriarchal paradigm that the protagonist is abused within:

> Humans and monsters both understand stories about magic and marvel and myth are made interesting by their stemming from trauma and violence and blood. (Song 2023)

Chlorine makes a significant link between humanity and non-human creatures in their innate fascination with violence. Contrary to what the quote says, it is not always myth that is drenched in blood to make it more interesting. Look no further than the constantly spoken phrase "World War II was the last great war," citing the death toll of 63 million to only enhance its valor. Monsters share this nature of cruelty against others—however, they are much more inclined to kill for defensive purposes due to their alignment with animal instincts. Mermaids have an especially powerful impulse to live on the defensive. As creatures who are adjacent to women, they are vulnerable to the violations that human women are. It is in order to cope with the transgressions against her body that the protagonist turns to the empowering imagery of the mermaid.

It is these differences in the construction of the mermaid figure that distance modern stories of sirens to those from ancient times, even if they are all iterations of one type of creature. Global mythological fish-women were creatures who signified impending danger, women who could entice a sailor to drown in the currents for seemingly no reason other than a bit of entertainment. They rarely had any depth aside from their overlapping beauty and violence.

In modern literary works, however, in an era when entertainment and mind-numbing, time-consuming media fill the lives of modern women, the idea of a life that

deviates from the patriarchal paradigm is one that strikes envy. Mermaids become a mirror that reflect the current concerns of women, as well as concepts of race and gender as a whole. They are no longer simple harbingers of death.

Women have always grasped onto the stories of sirens as an unattainable dream, free of male transgressions against their bodies. Whether they were ancient women hiding their glee at the sirens' abilities to get rid of oppressive men, or girls in the modern era daydreaming of having a siren's tail and inhabiting a realm without pressures of beauty, fish-women in literature have become a symbol of self-reliance and bodily autonomy. In a historical context where women have been brutalized by patriarchal societies both in war and during peacetime, life in the ocean is not any more hostile than the world they inhabit. Human women and fish women share the fear of being violated, dissected, or killed for male voyeuristic enjoyment or wartime acts.

The dehumanization of women in patriarchal societies in order to subjugate them to the domestic sphere is something that sirens completely reject. They are unable to be controlled within the turbulent domain they reside in, and gender roles essentially dissolve in the ocean. It is for these reasons that literary representations of fish women have become such essential figures in modern feminist movements. Their subversion of the patriarchal paradigms they were originally created under, as well as their versatility for reflecting changing concepts of womanhood is what has immortalized mermaids, sirens, and their global counterpoints.

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The Detective as the Culprit

Grace Foor

Mystery stories or detective fiction are meant to captivate the reader. They create a fast-paced environment which the reader cannot help but be sucked into. According to S.S. Van Dine, there are certain rules that writers must adhere to in detective fiction in order to make it a fair game for the reader. However, sometimes these rules must be broken in order to take detective fiction to a level beyond the basic game. In Van Dine's "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories," he states that a fundamental rule for writing detective fiction is that "the detective himself, or one of the official investigators, should never turn out to be the culprit" (215). This rule is violated in Charlotte Perkins Stetson's short story "The Yellow Wallpaper," in which the narrator attempts to investigate supernatural events in her home that she turns out to be perpetrating herself. However, this breaking of the traditional rules of detective fiction is necessary because it allows Stetson to convey important themes about women's mental health and the social containment of women through their gender role.

While "The Yellow Wall-Paper" is a complex story that can often bend the reader's sense of time and reality in a way that matches the narrator's experience with her own mental illness, at a surface level, it follows the pattern of a detective story. When the narrator describes the country house in the beginning of the story as a

"haunted house" (Stetson 79), it sets up a mystery for her as well as the reader to solve. The mystery is continued as she notices more and more peculiarities about the house:all of the greenhouses in the home are broken and her husband will not let her sleep in the room "downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window" (Stetson 80). These mysteries help to set up the detective fiction aspect of the story in a clear cut manner before the more complex themes of the story are introduced.

The main mystery that the narrator investigates throughout the story is the mystery of the titular yellow wallpaper. The narrator's first description of the mystery of the yellow wallpaper is that the paper is "stripped off … in great patches all around the head of [her] bed as far as [she] can reach" (Stetson 80). It certainly seems curious in an otherwise decent home that this particular room would have fallen into such disarray. The reader thus follows the narrator down the path of questioning what exactly is happening at this house. However, the mystery becomes even more curious as the story progresses, and perhaps even supernatural. The narrator details that the paper "knew what a vicious influence it had" upon her (Stetson 81). As an object like wallpaper is not sentient, it cannot really be knowledgeable. Therefore, it is either supernaturalor the narrator is mentally unstable. This idea of multiple possible perceptions is furthered when the narrator's ideas about the wallpaper turn into actual visions, and not just feelings. She describes the wallpaper as having "absurd, unblinking eyes" (Stetson 82). This certainly adds to the eerie factor of the story, and the idea that the house may be haunted. The reader is reminded that the narrator is still investigating the wallpaper, and not merely commenting on its nature, when she says that she "will follow that pointless pattern to some sort of a conclusion" (Stetson 82). This clearly follows the role

of a detective, piecing together clues until they come to some kind of logical conclusion. The mystery reaches its peak when the woman believes she discovers that there is a woman living underneath the wallpaper. She describes "a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern" (Stetson 84), and that she swears she sees the same woman during the day "out of every one of [her] windows" (Stetson 86). This would most certainly have to be either supernatural or a lapse in sanity, as there is not a physically possible way for a woman to live behind the wallpaper and creep around, then miraculously appear outside as well.

The climax of the story occurs when the narrator begins to tear the yellow wallpaper in order to free the woman underneath. The narrator believes that together, she and the woman in the wallpaper have "peeled off yards of that paper" (Stetson 87). The narrator's goal in tearing off the wallpaper is to "astonish" her husband by proving to him that despite his doubts about her sanity (Stetson 87). She is right about the women creeping behind the wallpaper. This goal aligns with that of a true detective: to solve the mystery and explain to their audience exactly how they did it. However, the narrative seems to take a sudden turn when the woman questions if the women she sees creeping around outside came "out of the wallpaper as [she] did" (Stetson 88). She also has tied herself up with a rope, as she said she would do with the woman when she tore her out of the wallpaper. In this way, the narrator, as the detective, has identified herself as the culprit, the woman creeping in the wallpaper. Thus, the detective is the culprit, and one of Van Dine's fundamental rules of detective fiction is broken.

The interesting thing about this disruption of Van Dine's rules is that the detective does not withhold the fact that she is the culprit from the reader; she does not

know it herself. This is made possible through the use of an unreliable narrator in its most extreme form. This unreliability is first highlighted through the opinions of John, the narrator's husband. The narrator writes that her husband is a physician, but that he "does not believe [she is] sick" (79). First of all, the narrator's husband being a physician makes him a voice of reason in the story, even if the narrator makes him out to be extreme and cruel. Secondly, it is made clear to the reader that John does, in fact, believe his wife is sick. While he may not, as the narrator states, understand "how much [she] really suffers" (81), he does make attempts to help her with her nervous tendencies. The narrator even admits later that "he loves [her] very dearly, and hates to have [her] sick" (83). While his logic in his wife's treatment may be flawed, John does acknowledge that his wife is ill, and this serves to show the reader that they may be dealing with an unreliable narrator.

The most concrete evidence that the narrator in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" is an unreliable narrator is her frequent lapses in memory and consciousness. Throughout the story, the reader can see signs of extreme lapses in memory in the narrator. However, these lapses are presented by Stetson in the subtext, and can really only be noticed when reflecting on the story or rereading it. One of the most obvious lapses in the narrator's memory is when she mentions that the wallpaper is ripped off "as far as [she] can reach" (Stetson 80). While on a first pass through of the story, this may seem like a simple observation or maybe an attempt to give the reader a sense of how the room looks, on a second reading it becomes clear that the wallpaper is ripped as far as the narrator can reach because she has been in the house before and she has ripped the wallpaper herself, although she has no memory of it. Another instance of these lapses in memory is

when the narrator describes the room that she is staying in as a "nursery first and then a playroom and gymnasium ... for the windows are barred for little children and there are rings and things in the walls" (Stetson 80). At the ending of the story, when the woman seems to become dangerous to herself and possibly others, and begins to express a desire to escape, it becomes clear that this room is not a playroom at all, and that the fixtures in the room are really "the paraphernalia of confinement" (Gilbert 92). Yet again, the reader can see a clear lapse in memory when the narrator remarks that the "bedstead is fairly gnawed" (Stetson 87), and attributes it to the children she believes lived there before her, but a few lines later remarks that she "bit off a little piece at the corner ..." of the bed and that "...it hurt [her] teeth" (Stetson 87). This implies that the narrator is the one that has been gnawing the side of the bedpost, since she not only does it out of frustration, but seems to be sore from having done it before. Therefore, the detective and narrator in the story proves to be extremely unreliable, which allows for the detective to be the culprit, but not be aware of it herself. This unreliability also helps to debunk the idea that something supernatural, like a haunting, is really occurring in the house. This helps Stetson to highlight what she herself stated as a "description of a case of nervous breakdown" (Gilbert 91), rather than allowing the curious events in her story to be attributed to a supernatural force.

The ending of the short story shows Stetson's intentions in making the detective figure the culprit. Gilbert and Gubar write in their book *The Madwoman in the Attic*, "the figure creeping through and behind the wallpaper is both the narrator and the narrator's double" (Gilbert 92). The narrator first recognizes that she and the woman in the wallpaper are doubles when she identifies the creature in the wallpaper as a woman.

Both are trapped, the narrator in her bedroom, and by her restrictive husband, and the woman behind the wallpaper. This seems to link the two together. The narrator also begins to mirror the woman or women in the wallpaper through her actions. She remarks that she "always locks the door while creeping by daylight" (Stetson 86); she cannot creep at night because John would hear her. Likewise, the woman in the wallpaper creeps in the daylight, but also at night. This implies that the narrator and the woman in the wallpaper share similar habits, or even that the narrator is the woman in the wallpaper and does not remember creeping at night due to yet another lapse in memory. Finally, the narrator begins to identify the woman in the wallpaper as herself. Her remarks that she "came out of that wall-paper" make this idea clear to the reader (Stetson 88). Additionally, the narrator wishes to tie up the woman in the wallpaper in order to prove to John that the woman exists. In ultimately tying up herself, the narrator makes it clear that she has identified herself as the culprit in her own mystery.

In making the detective figure the culprit in her own story, Stetson first makes an important statement about mental health. The culprit that is making the narrator's life painful not nervousness or overstimulation as her "paternalistic physician" husband believes (Gilbert 91). Rather, it is the feeling of repression that causes her mental state to deteriorate. John's refusal to even allow her to "write a word" or leave the house is telling of the narrator's feelings of both creative and social repression (Stetson 81), and actually serves to worsen her condition. Through freeing the woman in the wallpaper who acts in a rather animalistic manner, the narrator frees her own double, her own subconscious, and her wild creative side. She throws off her social role as a wife and mother, and instead divulges into a life of creeping around like some kind of creature.

The audacity of this act is conveyed by John's swoon at the end of the story. By tearing down the wallpaper and freeing the woman inside, the narrator frees herself of the gender roles and restrictions that confine her. This newfound freedom shows that women can step outside the boundaries that society creates for them, but it comes at the cost of being perceived as completely insane. Through this theme, Stetson conveys that the way her society perceives women's mental heath is deeply hypocritical, as the cure for madness is do deprive women of a life of their own, especially creatively, when this inability to express themselves is what drives women to madness in the first place. This theme could not be conveyed without the detective ending up unconsciously as the culprit, as the narrator must both feel the anguish of confinement and have the ability to free herself.

Charlotte Perkins Stetson's short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" paints itself first as a detective story. The narrative of a woman stuck in a haunted house that seems to have mysterious or even supernatural events happening all around her that she must investigate seems to fit the model of detective fiction quite well. However, the ending of the story, which proves that the detective figure herself is the culprit, even if she does not directly admit it, prompts the reader to look back at the story as a whole. Subtextual clues that Stetson leaves for the reader prove that the narrator in her story is unreliable as they come, experiencing frequent gaps in memory that undermine her abilities as a detective and put holes in the narrative that she has created for herself. In the end, it turns out that the narrator quite literally has been haunting herself, perpetuating an important theme that women have the ability to free themselves despite their social and mental confines, but must do so at the risk of seeming insane. Therefore, by violating

Van Dine's rule of detective fiction that the detective must never turn out to be the culprit proves necessary for Stetson, and her addition of the unreliable narrator allows her to create a captivating story with what would have been a radical take on the treatment of women, and especially mentally ill women at the time.

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Stephen King's Theme of Innocence in Fantasy

Katie Groves

Fantasy is a diverse genre that typically includes supernatural elements and themes relating to them. One well-known writer who includes some fantasy in many of his novels is Stephen King. Even so, he writes novels that deal with many different genres and does not like to box himself into a single category. A common thread throughout his novels is magic or supernatural power that makes his books fall into a fantasy realm in some ways. King is unique and talented because he incorporates important themes that apply to real life, but also have a touch of supernatural elements. This makes King's books appealing because he incorporates fiction and fantasy while still having multiple life lessons intertwined that leave every reader with the ability to connect and apply it to their own lives. One theme that he develops throughout many of his books is innocence, and how that inexperience relates to supernatural abilities. His focus on innocence, or one's loss of it, is something that every reader can understand since everyone becomes more aware as they grow and experience the sometimes harsh realities of life. In both of his novels, *The Shining* and its sequel *Doctor Sleep,* Stephen

King incorporates childhood innocence, specifically by masterfully interconnecting "the shine" with innocence.

In *The Shining,* Danny is a child who has "the shine," or the ability to see the future and past and communicate with others using his mind. Danny cannot even fully read yet, but he is overly aware of many adult topics due to his shine. King purposefully makes this complicated connection, where Danny knows of adult ideas but does not fully know how to contextualize and cope with them and figure out what they mean. For example, Danny "understood a little about losing your marbles, not as much as he did about getting a baby..." (King, *The Shining* 286). Danny is being introduced to many things that he is too innocent to fully comprehend, but he is trying to grapple with these deep and mature topics while being innocent, young, and not even able to read yet. This juxtaposition of his age and his cognizance remind the reader about how deep the topics he is dealing with are, while King also reminds the readers of how young and innocent Danny is. Again, for example, Danny says, "'...but I don't *understand* things!' Danny burst out. 'I *do* but I *don't!* People... they feel things and I feel them, but I don't know what I'm feeling!'" (King, *The Shining* 120).

While Danny is trying to comprehend his mother's and father's feelings and what they are each individually grappling with, though, he still is trying to learn about himself and simply be a child. Danny is still innocent but is trying to fathom what his father's feelings are regarding drinking and how his mom is unhappy with his dad, while simultaneously dealing with frightening images and experiences in the Overlook Hotel. His shine gives him the ability to know his family's adult thoughts, meanwhile he is trying to understand his own feelings and thoughts. He does not have a sibling or

someone else to share his complicated burden at the beginning of the novel, so he keeps to himself and just tries his best to decipher whatever he can. Part of his shining is his ability to see an imaginary friend whom he calls Tony. Many young kids have an imaginary friend when they are innocent and growing, and this is one way that King links the fantastical ability to shine with the way a child develops. Dan's father asked Danny, "'...then how did you know, doc?' Daddy asked. 'Tony showed me'" (King, *The Shining* 43). Danny's parents realized that he was young and innocent enough to have imaginary friends but were concerned since his imaginary friend seemed to show him things that he should have no way of knowing, like their inner thoughts and things that would happen in the future. Danny is usually slightly confused about what Tony shows him. King masterfully states, "...and suddenly Danny had one of those flashes of understanding that frightened him most of all; it was like a sudden glimpse of some incomprehensible machine that might be safe or might be deadly dangerous. He was too young to know which. He was too young to understand" (King, *The Shining* 120). So even though Danny is wise for his age because of the shine, he is still innocent and learning. At the end of the novel, King reveals to the reader and Danny what Tony actually is and why his name is Tony. King explains, "...his features were that of his father, as if Tony—as if the Daniel Anthony Torrance that would someday be—was a halfling caught between father and son, a ghost of both, a fusion" (*The Shining* 620). Danny grows enough in his comprehension of the shining through this novel that Tony, which is short for his middle name, Anthony, and is just an extension of Danny himself, helped him lose some of his innocence and try to cope and understand some of the many images Danny did not understand from his shine. Tony in some ways helped Danny

bridge the gap between his innocence and his growing knowledge of the world around him and his shining ability. This also helps the reader realize that Tony was a prediction in some ways of how Danny would be in the future and how he would be somewhat like his father as he becomes less innocent. Danny's inexperience and attempt at understanding in *The Shining* melds nicely with his wisdom and knowledge—and struggles—he has acquired when the readers see him as a young and then middle-aged man in *Doctor Sleep*.

As Danny grows and develops throughout these two novels, so does his knowledge of the shining and his control over it. King's subtle shift from calling him "Danny" in *The Shining* to "Dan" in *Doctor Sleep* is also indicative of his maturity and growth in knowledge and experience. Dan can recognize inexperience in other children once he is older, even if he was somewhat robbed of his own innocence in *The Shining*. Though he wanted to be nothing like his father when he was younger in the Overlook, he begins to become like his father as he grows up and struggles with alcohol. At the beginning of *Doctor Sleep,* Dan awoke hungover in an apartment with a woman named Deenie, took her money, and turned around to see her young son, Tommy, watching him. In his unawareness, the toddler tried to touch the cocaine on the table because he thought it was candy, but he did not get any. Dan then grappled with the fear that the child saw him take the money, but thought, "If the kid saw him take it, so what? He wasn't even two. Kids that young accepted everything adults did" (King, *Doctor Sleep* 54). Tommy's innocence is something that Dan rationalized would save him from the guilt of taking the money since the child did not even understand what was happening. Tommy and his innocence haunted Dan later in the novel, however, when Dan found

out that the child died from an abusive uncle. Regarding his precognition about Tommy's death and Deenie's suicide, King writes that Dan "understood much more than he wanted to" (*Doctor Sleep* 95). King compares Tommy's ignorance here to Dan's wish to be unaware, but his inability to be because he can shine. Dan wished to not understand what had happened to the child because he thinks back to how he stole from Deenie, and inadvertently from Tommy since Deenie supported him, and feels so guilty. He wished that he did not have this knowledge due to his shine, which shows how as he has aged, his understanding of what all the shining shows him has grown. He realizes that the shining is a part of him, and it is his job to try to interpret what he is shown and what he hears. This complicated shift from Danny's confusion in *The Shining* to comprehending what occurs and not wanting to have such a talent in *Doctor Sleep* is one of the many ways that King alludes to the complexity of innocence and humanity through the use of fantastical elements.

King's powerful view of loss of innocence and the shining is also portrayed in *Doctor Sleep* through Abra, a young girl who has the shining and reaches out to Dan. As the novel progresses, Dan realizes that he is seeing and hearing things from a young child who has the shine, just like he did when he was younger. He realizes that she is learning and growing and powerful but does not quite know how to control her shine yet or comprehend what is happening. Just like Dan's parents feared for him when he was younger, Abra's parents also realize to some extent her strange ability, and they begin to worry for her. King focuses in this novel on Abra's innocence through her parents' fears for her and their wishes for her to lose her shining power. Abra's father voiced that "'We're afraid…. Me, Lucy, Chetta—scared to death. Not of her, but for her. Because

she's just *little,* do you see?'" (King, *Doctor Sleep* 142). Her parents worry about how the images and things she experiences affect her, due to how young and innocent she is. At a young age, Abra accidentally witnessed the brutal murder and torture of a young boy due to her shining power. Abra "...cried quietly with her hands over her face. Being forced to think of Bradley Trevor again and how he died was bad enough, but it wasn't just him. There were all those other kids to think about..." (King, *Doctor Sleep* 245). Children are usually sheltered from certain life problems until they are deemed old enough to understand and handle them, but in King's novels, children's supernatural visions and knowledge compromise their innocence that they would have as a typical child.

If King dramatizes this with Abra and Dan, he also shows how Dan has grown since his days of first discovering his shining and his loss of innocence through the violence and adult topics he witnessed and understood. Dan's old friend Hallorann hearkened back to these moments and addressed Dan saying, "'You weren't helpless in the Overlook when you were a child, and you're not helpless now'" (King, *Doctor Sleep* 100). This statement is meant to help Dan pivot from viewing his shining as a burden and an unfair loss of innocence to viewing it as a helpful phenomenon that he can master to help both himself and others. Dan was able to use his shining in the Overlook even if he did not fully comprehend everything and Hallorann reminds him to use this gift that he has begun to master. Dan's loss of innocence and accumulation of knowledge, when viewed and used in the right way, lead him to helping others with the same power, like Abra, and also helping those who are in need, like the people in a hospice center. Instead of letting her frightening power corrupt her, Abra also decides to

use her own loss of innocence as a tool to save others. She thought of the other children, like the boy that was murdered and did not want anyone to have the same fate. She combats the members of the True Knot who murdered Bradley, not solely for revenge or personal gain, but because she felt that it was her moral duty to prevent it from happening to other children. Abra thought about "All those gap-toothed smiles and all those eyes that knew even less of the world than Abra did herself..." (King, *Doctor Sleep* 245-246).

This comparison between children who are Abra's age, but still known much less than her, is an interesting way that King shows how age does not determine experience in life like many people think. In this way, he comments on how people have different levels of innocence and gain knowledge of life at different rates. King also skillfully uses the shining in this manner to represent how people can use innocence or the loss of it to transform others' lives, and how the superpower the characters in his novels possess grows with them as they develop and age. The parallel between the shining and lack of knowledge illustrates how trauma and gaining experience and knowledge at a young age can be used to mentor others going through similar issues instead of letting the problems dim one's life and internally destroy them. For Dan, the death of an innocent child and his mother propelled him to turn his life around and to help others, along with his childhood experiences in the Overlook, while Abra was able to use her gain in knowledge and experiences to save other kids around her age from a terrible fate. When Dan was younger like Abra, he was able to use his shine in *The Shining* to save himself and his mother. King uses this thread of innocence in both novels paired with the ability

to shine to show others how growing awareness through experiences can be used as a tool to help people who have had similar experiences navigate life.

King's mysterious and supernatural shining is a wonderful comparison to the human condition of innocence. He shows how innocence is, in some ways, something to be cherished and held onto, yet necessary to let go of so that one can grow up. The link between Dan starting to have adult knowledge and how he does not always want to understand shows that maturity and growth goes hand in hand with King's use of inexperience and supernatural abilities. This added depth to his novels through the linking of lack of knowledge and the supernatural helps readers be able to enjoy the fantasy aspects while simultaneously having a way to personally connect with the novel. Many people want to grow up when they are younger, but once grown, realize how adult knowledge is not as appealing as it seemed when they were younger. King's conversion of the premature and sometimes painful understanding from the shining in Danny as a child to it being used as a gift and a way to aid others is a direct comment on the human condition of empathy and helping others. Using Dan and Abra, King shows how no one is simply going through something alone, and that there is always someone else who can help and who understands and has been there. In this way, King links the supernatural and magical to humanity, making his novels complicated, but relatable. Though the supernatural is not a human condition, his novels are important because they mimic life in some ways; life is not simple and straightforward, but instead is confusing and complicated as one grows up. Life is also about hard and troubling things being able to be used for a pure and worthy purpose; King shows how something bad can be used for good. While most people may not personally experience a supernatural phenomenon

like King writes about in his novels, his ability to form a deep and complicated connection between human conditions like innocence with the supernatural and fantastical in his novels makes the readers feel like they have.

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Antagonism and Hysteria: The Female Supernatural in Literature

Sharmista Sen Gupta

Human beings have been fascinated by elements of the supernatural and otherworldly since the beginning of time. Over the centuries, human intrigue with the fantastical has manifested itself in literary works ranging from the intervention of the Olympian Gods in Homer's epics, 'The Iliad' and 'The Odyssey' to popular works such as Stephanie Meyer's 'Twilight' series. Representations of the supernatural have dealt with the malaise of the modern human being, the blurring of the fine line between good and evil, the incorporation of mythical creatures as alter egos of the human subject, or even presented 'swoon-worthy' characters who have stolen the hearts of millions of fans worldwide. However, when it comes to the figure of the 'feminine' supernatural, we often come across instances of antagonism and mental illness being attributed to them. This leads to the effervescence of an imperative question – why are female characters targeted with a specific category of supernatural representation? Why does mental illness lead to the culmination of antagonistic sentiments only in the case of women? Is this a 'female condition' or an outcome of patriarchal oppression? The essay seeks to answer these pressing questions with reference to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper."

Etymologically, 'supernatural' derives from the Medieval Latin word *supernaturalis*, which literally translates to 'beyond the natural'. The supernatural involves mythical creatures like centaurs, vampires, and faeries and otherworldly abilities such as teleportation, levitation, wizardry, black magic, etc. in a literary narrative. It operates on the visible defiance of the 'laws' of nature. However, we must ask ourselves who defines these laws. Based on the Cartesian project which proclaims human beings as the 'masters and possessors of nature', we can deduce that the power to demarcate and designate certain phenomena as 'natural' or 'supernatural' lies in the hands of human society (Descartes, 51). This provides an understanding of the projection of supernatural female characters in works of literature. It is necessary to consider how these women appear to be overturning the so-called laws of nature, and who has etched these as concrete. Most of these characters do not conform to the domestic roles of wife and mother, exhibit sexually forward behavior, and are a haunting presence in the lives of others. Setting aside the gothic aspect of such portraiture, can the other aspects be considered supernatural? If human society determines what the laws of nature are, then can the 'natural' become synonymous with the patriarchal? This question will be investigated to better understand how the patriarchal apparatus plays a major role in determining the condition of women.

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë was published in 1847 under the alias Currer Bell (Kapadia, xii). The novel is cited as a 'feminist bildungsroman' because it traces the growth and development of its protagonist, Jane Eyre, as she battles with the challenges of being orphaned at infancy and ends up becoming a learned and self-dependent young woman (Gupta, 486). *Jane Eyre* is widely recognized for scintillating various gender

concerns and the contemporary issues surrounding women by drawing upon the polarity between the ascetic generosity and selflessness of Helen Burns and the 'madness' of Bertha Mason.

The character of Bertha Rochester (née Mason) in *Jane Eyre* is popularly known as the 'madwoman in the attic' (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979). Bertha is introduced as Edward Rochester's wife much later in the narrative when he is about to get married to Jane (Brontë, 256). However, she makes numerous appearances before her formal introduction as a raging spirit who is hellbent upon causing trouble to Rochester (Brontë, 275). Bertha becomes one of the earliest representations of the supernatural in women's writing because she is seen as 'something' monstrous and ghastly, setting things on fire and prowling the corridors of Thornfield Hall like a ghost. Bertha is described as unusually tall, discolored, ghostly, and savage woman with an insatiable sexual appetite (Brontë, 250). Not only is this description fueled by a colonial sentiment, but Bertha's ethnic identity as a Creole woman also allows for her to be dehumanized and adds to her ostensible susceptibility to madness (Brontë, 257). Elaine Showalter, in her essay, "Charlotte Brontë: Feminine Heroine", draws upon supernatural vocabulary which has been used to describe Bertha –

> In the novel, Bertha is described as 'the foul German spectre – the vampire', 'a demon', 'a hag', 'an Indian Messalina', and 'a witch'. Each of these is a traditional figure of female deviance with its own history in folklore – the Vampire, who sucked men's blood (as Bertha does when she stabs her brother), and the witch, who visited men by night and rode them to exhaustion, were the products of elemental fears of women. (Showalter, 430)

Before analyzing the aspect of 'madness', it is necessary to understand the conditions which led to Bertha's 'insanity'. Sometime after her marriage to Mr. Rochester, Bertha is confined into a small room in the attic of Thornfield Hall. She is taken care of by Grace, a maid, and her presence is erased from the household to the extent that Mr. Rochester is identified as an unmarried man (Brontë, 273). The supernatural presence of Bertha hereafter can be viewed as an assertion of her agency and as a member of the household. Brontë's mode of displaying the oppression of women under the patriarchy may be through Bertha's madness. A myopic reading of the novel may suggest that Bertha Mason is the antagonist to the Jane-Edward relationship. She tears off Jane's wedding dress and prevents Edward Rochester from remarrying (Brontë, 250). We can see how a comparison is being drawn between Jane and Bertha. The nineteenth-century conception of the 'Victorian rose' or the ideal woman who is chaste, dainty, and polite, can be seen in the moral righteousness of Jane, who learns to become a lady through education in order to alleviate her social standing. Bertha, on the contrary, becomes the embodiment of sin because she does not conform to the ideas associated with a 'Victorian rose' and freely expresses herself. In other words, we can say that the patriarchy mandates certain mannerisms and behavioral patterns for women, overturning which is perceived as madness by society. Michel Foucault, in his work, *Madness and Civilization*, writes that "madness borrowed its face from the mask of the beast" (Foucault, 72). With reference to this statement, scholars suggest that Bertha's animality arises from her confinement by Mr. Rochester and causes for the assertion of her will to be seen as madness which is the outcome of sin (Gupta, 488). Bertha's bid for her own rights becomes sinful because she is conspicuously overriding patriarchal

dictates, which are proclaimed as the ultimate, becoming congruent with the idea of virtue.

Compartmentalization as a precondition for the defiance of patriarchal norms, leading to the perception of the female subject as 'mad' and 'hysterical' is resonated not only by *Jane Eyre* but also "The Yellow Wallpaper" (abbreviated as 'TYW') by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Published in The New England Magazine in 1892, the short story is an account of the female narrator's experience of being 'secured' in a room covered with yellow wallpaper by her husband to recover from an undetected disease. Yellow symbolizes illness, oftentimes being associated with jaundice which causes yellowing of the skin. This can be corroborated by how the narrator is primarily identified by the fact that she is unwell and is suffering from a disease which is both psychological and physiological. This disease can be understood through the feminist discourse on 'female hysteria' – a condition which has been historically attributed to women.

'Hysteria' derives from the Greek word 'hystera' which means uterus or womb (Gray, n.p). Earlier, hysteria was seen solely as a physical condition resulting from starvation which may culminate into the hunger for food or sex. During the Middle Ages, hysteria was linked to witchcraft and demonology. Multiple approaches were postulated to cure hysteria such as sexual abstinence, herbal treatment as well as severe punishment and purification with fire (Tasca et. al., 2012). In the early 20th Century, with the proposition of the psychoanalytic theory, Sigmund Freud inferred that hysteria, despite males being diagnosed with it, was a female disease emerging from traumatic sexual experiences during childhood (Freud, 1896). It was much later, in the 1980s, that the term 'female hysteria' was omitted from medical manuals.

Feminists have argued that hysteria, the symptoms of which also include rage and deviance, is not only caused by repressed sexuality but also by the trauma stemming from the patriarchal subjugation of women. In Gilman's short story, the narrator's husband John, a physician, diagnoses her with a "temporary nervous depression – a slight hysterical tendency". John prescribes medicine and tonic for healing his wife, "phosphates or phosphites" which his wife cannot distinguish between (TYW, 224). This shows how John never properly explained to the narrator the implications of her condition, denoting the mode in which the men of medical science claim to possess knowledge of the female anatomy and systematically make information inaccessible to women to exercise control over them.

As readers, we may conceive the narrator's condition as post-partum depression. Whether or not it is true, a closer reading of the text accentuates that the narrator is a victim of patriarchal control and subordination. The fact that the narrator and her family spend their summer in a colonial mansion enables us to draw a parallel between colonialism and patriarchy – both of which are based on authority, tyranny, and subjection of individuals. It was John's decision to keep the narrator confined in a room and ask his sister, Jennie, to take care of the house; he never consults the narrator before taking action.

Eugenia C. Delamotte, in her essay "Male and Female Mysteries in *The Yellow Wallpaper*", states, "John prefers that his wife sleep as much as possible; she deceives him by only pretending, meanwhile pursuing a project she has come to see as urgently important: concentrating all her intellectual energies on her wallpaper" (Delamotte, 260).

The supernatural finds its place in 'The Yellow Wallpaper' through the narrator's creation of a dim sub-pattern of a woman residing behind the wallpaper. The narrative arc traces the evolution of the narrator's engagement with the yellow wallpaper. She begins by abhorring the yellow color with utmost indefatigability, progresses to somewhat liking the wallpaper, then conceives the image of a woman residing behind it, and finally, tears up the wallpaper to free the woman and, by extension, herself, symbolizing her liberation from patriarchal oppression. The anguished, vulnerable, and tortured sub-pattern can be understood as an alter ego of the narrator and her oppression under the patriarchy.

The modus operandi of the patriarchy is based effectively in withholding information to exercise control and domination. John never properly discusses the implications of her condition with the narrator and prevents her from 'working' – that is writing – and recommends rest and care for her to get better. This indicates a curtailment of a woman's right to express and write about her experiences with reference to patriarchal suppression within the domestic space, giving us a glimpse into the physical and cultural conditions, combating which women's writing is produced. The narrator writes in the confines of her yellow-laced chamber without the knowledge of John and his sister.

The narrator's psychological unpacking of the pattern of the yellow wallpaper is rather intriguing. She begins by exclaiming her disgust for the color, talking about its unintelligible pattern, all of which culminates in her perceiving the pattern as that of a woman being suppressed. The narrator scribes, "On a pattern like this, by daylight, there is a lack of sequence, a defiance of law, that is a constant irritant to a normal

mind" (TYW, 233). This traversing in terms of thought and interpretation underlines the narrator's journey from being submissive to patriarchal dictates to undergoing a therapy of her own to attain freedom. The "lack of sequence" and "defiance of law" signify her non-compliance with patriarchal norms incited by the "normal," patriarchal mind.

In the end, the narrator tears up the wallpaper in a frenzy, right in front of her husband, signifying her autonomy from the room and, the shedding of the side of her that adhered to the patriarchal conventions inflicted by John and curing herself of her ostensible hysteria (TYW, 240). The story is open to interpretation and does not provide a coherent conclusion. But this does not undermine the attainment of freedom of the narrator based on her own accord. The narrator indulges in a kind of self-therapy by conjecturing the pattern of a woman to heal herself not just from her undetected ailment, but also from patriarchal authority.

Thus, the supernatural distinctly manifests itself when it comes to the representation of female characters. With reference to Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* and the female narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper", we can deduce that the patriarchy generates adverse conditions for women, and attributes the consequences to madness and hysteria, ostensibly 'female disorders.' The actions of the supernatural woman underscore patriarchal oppression and subjugation and serve as an assertion of their agency. An inspiring aspect of the projection of the supernatural through female characters is how they exhibit fortitude and do not let patriarchal norms undermine them. They pave the way for the analysis of major literary texts and milestones from a feminist perspective.

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No Rest for the Wicked: Literary Hauntings in *Wuthering Heights* and "The Altar of the Dead"

Megan Ha

There is a specter haunting the literary worlds of Emily Brontë and Henry James: common to both "The Altar of the Dead" and *Wuthering Heights,* is the shadow of death and the ghosts that emerge from it. In both texts, James and Brontë utilize elements of the Gothic genre, including the presence of ghosts and the appearance of the supernatural in order to mediate the way social relationships and subjectivity function for George Stransom and Heathcliff.

Through his usage of Gothic elements in "The Altar of the Dead", James imposes a consistent haunting upon the narrative, which is reflected in Stransom's own interiority. While walking home past a row of shops in London, Stransom finds himself stopping in front of one, entranced "... by the effect of a shop-front that lighted the dull brown air with its mercenary grin . . . It was the window of a jeweller whose diamonds and sapphires seemed to laugh, in flashes like high notes of sound, with the mere joy of knowing how much more they were 'worth' than most of the dingy pedestrians staring at them from the other side of the pane" (James 3). Here, the jeweler's shop is alluring because of a dangerous quality it possesses. It cuts through the dullness of the London

evening with a "mercenary grin" that implies a kind of cold cunning. The diamonds and sapphires in the window are surely beautiful, but what truly makes them shine is the fact that they are described in opposition to the "dingy" onlookers separated by glass. The personification of the shop, with its wicked character, creates an unnatural impression that is magnified by the interactions that occur around it.

Stransom stands in front of the window thinking of Mary Antrim, as he "… lingered long enough to suspend, in a vision, a string of pearls about the white neck of Mary Antrim" (James 3). But why does Stransom turn to the pearls as opposed to the jewels in front of him? Why does Stransom not imagine Mary Antrim wearing diamonds or sapphires? Here, Stransom is absent from his own image, even though he precipitates the illusion. In the syntax of the line, the use of the infinitive "to suspend" creates distance between the real and imagined—the phrase both invokes the suspension of belief, while also eliciting the sense that the pearls are also superimposed, adding to the spectral quality of Stransom's vision. Moreover, the image Stransom conjures is visually striking; the focus of the sentence is the pearls, not Mary Antrim even though her white neck figures into this phantasmic representation. The focus on the pearls, which connote purity and virginity, is evocative, a kind of bridal fantasy that is especially haunting given that Mary Antrim had died with the promise of marriage over her. Thus, the elements of Stransom's vision make it clear that this image of Mary Antrim is not one that comes from a memory—rather, Stransom is building a new image of her as he remembers her, conflating memory and mourning.

Before walking away, Stransom is struck by a familiar voice that he recognizes, his friend Paul Creston and his new wife:

That new woman, that hired performer, Mrs. Creston? . . . This lady had a
face that shone as publicly as the jeweller's window, and in the happy
candour with which she wore her monstrous character was an effect of
gross immodesty. The character of Paul Creston's wife thus attributed to
her was monstrous. (James 4)

Here, Stransom experiences the most overt instance of the uncanny—he is confronted
by Paul Creston's new wife, who is at once Kate and not-Kate, though Stransom knows
that Kate, Paul's previous wife, is dead. Creston's new wife, then, is a kind of Gothic
femme fatale—her public demeanor is likened to the jeweller's window, described earlier
with its "mercenary grin;" her "happy candour" strikes Stransom as garish and
inappropriate; her character is "monstrous" not because of her own actions, but because
she occupies the space Kate once filled. The uncanny is represented in this encounter by
its fear of the distortion of the familiar—Creston's new wife appears here as a kind of
symbolic doppelgänger, supplanting a woman with whom Stransom associated all
things well. Creston, then, serves as a foil for Stransom's own behavior and validates his
mourning practices. His inability—or perhaps, his unwillingness—to leave memory in
the past is reflected through his revulsion towards Creston's own efforts to move on
from Kate's death. By perceiving Creston's new wife as a corrupted version of Kate,
Stransom can continue to hold on to his idealized versions of both Kate Creston and
Mary Antrim. Though neither of these characters actually appear to Stransom as
apparitions, James utilizes the supernatural to characterize both. As Stransom later
reflects: "He thought for a long time of how the closed eyes of dead women could still
live—how they could open again, in a quiet lamplit room, long after they had looked

their last" (James 5). Just as Stransom imagines the eyes of the dead opening to look upon the living, he too looks at them, casting his eyes eternally towards the past. Perhaps Catherine Earnshaw lives on for Heathcliff in this same way in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*.

While staying in Catherine's old room at the namesake residence, Lockwood encounters Catherine's ghost, who begs him to let her in, saying,

> 'I'm come home, I'd lost my way on the moor!' . . . As it spoke, [Lockwood] discerned, obscurely, a child's face looking through the window—Terror made [him] cruel; and finding it useless to attempt shaking the creature off, [he] pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down and soaked the bed-clothes: still it wailed, 'Let me in!' and maintained its tenacious gripe, almost maddening me with fear.
>
> (Brontë 25)

Here, Lockwood encounters Catherine in a nightmare; her appearance as her child self creates a threshold between the past and the present that elides boundaries—she is at once a child and a grown woman; she is both Catherine Linton and Heathcliff's Cathy. She appears here to Lockwood as a representation of the crossroads, revealing her own conflicted interiority. But the moment is marked by a spasm of violence: Lockwood grabs her wrists and attempts to split them on the window, spilling her phantom blood. The window, like that of Stransom's jeweler, creates a barrier between the real and the imagined, between the inside and the outside, the past and the present, and the living and the dead. Lockwood's instinct towards violence in this instance is an attempt to reestablish that very barrier, drawing Catherine's blood on the broken pane signifies an

inversion of its function. Instead of giving Catherine life in this instance, it acts to keep her from returning to life. In this way, Lockwood escapes to the confines of the present, Catherine remains on the other side, and Heathcliff is once again drawn into a moment in the past.

Catherine's haunting of Heathcliff, much like Mary Antrim and Kate Creston's hauntings of Stransom, is not unwanted—rather, the presence of ghosts for both Heathcliff and Stransom is indicative of their own desperation to be in the company of the dead. Like Stransom, Heathcliff does not attempt to escape from Catherine's ghost—instead, he actively seeks her out, even compelling her to haunt him after she dies. After Edgar Linton's funeral, Heathcliff convinces the sexton at the grave to also unearth Catherine's grave to let him gaze upon her. While telling this to Nelly, Heathcliff recalls an earlier, similar instance following his attempt to dig up Catherine's grave after her own funeral:

> I said to myself—'I'll have her in my arms again!' . . . I muttered, 'I wish they may shovel in the earth over us both!' and I wrenched at it more desperately still. There was another sigh, close at my ear. I appeared to feel the warm breath of it displacing the sleet-laden wind. I knew no living thing in flesh and blood was by; but, as certainly as you perceive the approach to some substantial body in the dark, though it cannot be discerned, so certainly I felt that Cathy was there: not under me, but on the earth.' (Brontë 294)

Heathcliff's supernatural encounter here serves to emphasize the incongruity between desire in life and desire in death. In both instances of excavating Catherine's grave,

Heathcliff's motivations to do so are manifestations of the erotic—his passion for Catherine does not wane, even in death. His wish to "have her in his arms again," is not derived from some kind of familial longing, rather, it comes from a place of transgressive desire mediated by the failure of the marriage plot. Catherine's death makes real the impossibility of Heathcliff's desire, thus causing her loss to function as a site for erotic refusal. Catherine is not defined by her personhood and is instead identified by the object of her body, by the likeness of her face, and by the coldness of her cheek. But at the same time, Catherine's supernatural presence takes on no form— her subjectivity, which is separated from the fact of her physicality in death, is embodied by the environment. Heathcliff senses her "warm breath" in the cold winds and feels her presence "not under [him] but on the earth," and in this way, Catherine trades the confines of her sexualized subjectivity to engage a spiritual haunting instead. Her embodiment of an objecthood distinct from the body thus demarcates a secondary haunting different from the physicality of her death. While discussing Hareton with Nelly, Heathcliff bemoans,

> For what is not connected with her to me? and what does not recall her? I cannot look down to this floor, but her features are shaped in the flags! In every cloud, in every tree—filling the air at night, and caught by glimpses in every object by day—I am surrounded with her image! The most ordinary faces of men and women—my own features—mock me with a resemblance. The entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda that she did exist, and that I have lost her! (Brontë 330)

Here, the manifestations of Catherine in every aspect of his environment, from her features appearing in the tiling of the floor to her ubiquity in his natural surroundings, serve to emphasize how her occupation of alternative subjectivity underscores her absence in Heathcliff's eyes. Catherine's haunting of him structures his interiority—his desperation to be around her and his earlier plea for her to stay with him even in death constitutes a tacit agreement to the terms of a kind of mental entrapment. But Catherine's haunting even escapes the confines of the locality of Wuthering Heights—Heathcliff confesses to seeing her in "the most ordinary faces of men and women," alluding to the fact that Catherine's absence in his life structures his every interaction (Brontë 330). The "dreadful collection of memoranda" that attests to the fact of her existence is representative of the construction of history in Heathcliff's mind, which is characterized by obsession (Brontë). It is the persistence of his own memory and the persistence of his sense of loss that structures his delusion. Heathcliff's repeated moments of recognition reanimate Catherine only to kill her in the same breath—he continues to engage with that which he knows no longer exists in order to prove to himself that it once did.

It is in this way that Catherine encompasses a convergent, hybrid haunting that occurs as a consequence of her own conflicted liminality. Once again, Catherine exists on the threshold of mourning, creating a distinction between life and death; the real and the imagined; the body and the soul. It is not the mere fact of her death that torments Heathcliff, rather, it is her rejection of boundaries and her refusal to remain in place that drive Heathcliff to exact revenge on her family and ancestors. Heathcliff's plan of

retribution—whether he realizes it or not—is his attempt to confine her spirit to his own.

As a consequence, Heathcliff embodies the classic Gothic archetype of the anti-hero, whose erratic, destructive behavior symbolizes an externalization of his own interiority. His violent, abusive behavior expresses the depth of his twisted grief. In this way, Heathcliff acts as a foil for George Stransom, whose methodical methods of mourning are juxtaposed by the high passion of his relationship with his ex-friend, Acton Hague.

Stransom first hears of Acton Hague's death in the newspaper, finding that he had died from a snake bite during his governorship of the Westward Islands. Stransom turns cold at the thought, recalling,

> ...the insult he had blankly taken from the only man with whom he had ever been intimate; the friend, almost adored, of his University years, the subject, later, of his passionate loyalty: so public that he had never spoken of it to a human creature, so public that he had completely overlooked it.
>
> (James 5)

Stransom's description of Acton Hague here stands in stark contrast to his description of Mary Antrim. Antrim is objectified by Stransom in the early scenes of the story—she is given no describing characteristics other than being symbolic of "...an affection that promised to fill his life to the brim" (James 2). Acton Hague, on the other hand, is characterized by a series of descriptive phrases that indicate a sense of high passion that is absent from that of Stransom's relationship with Mary Antrim. The use of similarly structured clauses in sequence creates a compounding effect that charts the progression

of Hague and Stransom's relationship: Hague is at once "...the only man with whom [Stransom] had ever been intimate..." and "...the friend, most adored," and "the subject . . . of his passionate loyalty." It is obvious that Hague is the subject of affection that Mary Antrim is not. The queerness of the relationship between Hague and Stransom is underscored by the dichotomy between the obscured and the visible surrounding Hague's insult of Stransom. The wrongdoing in question is a kind of secret that is at once completely public, yet knowable only to Stransom. In this way, it becomes clear that Stransom's discomfort is derived from a blurring between the public and the private. The evocation of the unspeakable in this instance can be interpreted as Stransom's own repression, creating a space within the text at the level of identification. Thus, Stransom's obsession with the ghosts of Kate Creston and Mary Antrim can be understood as a desire for the feminine, rather than a desire for the erotic, as demonstrated by the lack of the sensual in his recollections of both women. The Gothic elements that appear are queer-coded—Stransom is unsettled by the uncanny because he fears its manifestation in himself.

Stransom's repression is evident in his reaction to Acton Hague's death as well. While neither Heathcliff nor Stransom make any kind of attempt to forgive their ghosts, Heathcliff turns towards Catherine while Stransom turns away from Hague in an attempt to forget him. Stransom becomes absorbed in his mourning rituals and becomes obsessive about his death while also finding a companion in the other unnamed woman who kneels at his altar. She tells him, however, that her only dead is none other than Stransom's own Acton Hague, a revelation that threatens Stransom's relation to the world and those around him,

Then Stransom understood, while the room heaved like the cabin of a ship,

that its whole contents cried out with him, that it was a museum in his

honour, that all her later years had been addressed to him and that shrine he

himself had reared had been passionately converted to this use. It was all for

Acton Hague that she had kneeled every day at his altar. What need had there

been for a consecrated candle when he was present in the whole array?

(James 15)

This moment of anagnorisis, likened to a ship in a storm, demonstrates the extent to

which the gravity of this information is a complete upheaval of Stransom's worldview.

Like a Gothic *Oedipus Rex*, this ironic twist reveals the utter failure of Stransom's

retroactive plot of revenge. In a single moment, all of Stransom's careful plans are

subverted. While he attempted to forget Acton Hague, his companion memorialized

him, worshiping his memory and preserving it like a museum. While Stransom satisfied

his own principles by refusing to light a candle for Acton Hague, a candle had already

been burning for him on his altar. The images of a museum and a shrine as sites of

veneration for the memory of Acton Hague evoke the sense of the sacred, which is

simultaneously juxtaposed with its sacrilegious bearings on Stransom. But this

realization does not only disrupt his rituals, it disrupts the entire social community he

has formed in his communion with his own Dead, not to mention the nature of his

companionship with the other woman. Stransom's termination of his friendship with

the other woman in this instance is again a reflection of the failed marriage plot. The

marriage in this case, however, is not between him and his fellow worshiper—rather, the

marriage fails because of the impossibility of its queerness against the framework of

repression in the Gothic. Hague's ghost, then, serves as a reminder of the impossibility of speaking the unspeakable. With his death dies their quarrel, and along with that, Stransom dies a symbolic death, one in which high passion and desire collapse under the framework of fear.

As sociologist Avery Gordon wrote in her book *Ghostly Matters*,

> The ghost is not simply a dead or missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life. The ghost or the apparition is one form by which something is lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us, in its own way. (Gordon 8)

The ghosts of both "The Altar of the Dead" and *Wuthering Heights* represent the confluence of the past and the present. It is the uncanny and the strange; the unnatural and the unfamiliar—the moments of hesitation—that allow the subject to become haunted. Through their various acts of haunting, the ghosts that occupy Stransom and Heathcliff's memories govern the ways in which both characters attempt to interrogate their wrongs and escape their pasts.

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Gothic Posthumanism: A Performative, Feminist Evaluation of Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*

Eleanor Israel

Humanity, by nature of its population numbers and distribution, transcends any monolithic way of living. Of the few things that humanity does have in common across the world, creating buildings is habitually innate enough that it stands comparably to creating structured communities. While not a necessity, the buildings that humans create represent foundational conceptualizations of safety and stability. What happens, then, when buildings subvert these expectations of being orderly and compliant subjects to their human creators? The results are captured in all their disturbing glory through the literary haunted house. In a critical discussion of Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House,* an establishing Gothic work for the archetypal haunted house, alongside Karan Barad's work *Posthuman Performativity*, this essay will explore Western homes and their associations with domesticity, submissiveness, and order. A performative reevaluation of Jackson's Hill House offers the framework to reconceptualize relationships with the buildings around us, demanding consideration of the haunted house as a challenge to patriarchal anthropocentrism.

To offer a performative consideration of Jackson's Hill House, one must first understand how Barad's concepts of representationalism and performativity apply to architecture. Two key concepts underpin this: the fluidity of language, and entity interaction. In Barad's opening discussion of performativity, she summarizes Nietzsche's warnings against "the belief that grammatical categories reflect the underlying structure of the world" (Barad, *Posthuman Performativity* 209). In discussing Hill House, the title of Jackson's haunted house, it is worth taking note of the grammatical category of the word "house." House today is categorized as a common noun, meaning it refers to the general concept of an object and is not a term that refers to a unique entity. The representationalism that Nietzsche and by proxy Barad are warning against then would hold all houses as static spaces bound to the status of "insentient object." Performativity, by contrast, allows space for linguistic and definitional flexibility that can address categorical fluidity and overlap. Posthuman performativity addresses the entrenched philosophies of "human" and "nonhuman" as fixed categories reinforced by our linguistic norms. To discuss Hill House, we will examine how Jackson's characterization of the house pushes the boundary between "human" and "nonhuman" while simultaneously demonstrating assemblage with its human inhabitants.

The second concept key to reevaluating Hill House is Barad's proposition that performativity offers space for entity interaction or, what this essay will refer to more frequently, as an assemblage. Barad argues that in traditional representationalism "there are assumed to be two distinct and independent kinds of entities-representations and entities to be represented" (Barad, *Posthuman Performativity*

211). This assumption, founded on the power we vest in language, can be challenged through Barad's argument that the expression of agency crosses these distinctions by being "a matter of intra-acting; it is an enactment, not something that someone or something has" (Barad, *Posthuman Performativity* 232). Rather than humans being actors and houses being acted-upon objects, Barad offers a world in which the two are both actors and acted-upon in perpetuity with one another, creating an assemblage where the house and the inhabitants are "becoming" one another.

After establishing performativity in the context of Hill House, we can turn to Ron Broglio's *Thinking about stuff: posthumanist phenomenology and cognition* to further analyze Barad's performativity beyond the context of general human/non-human distinctions and into what Broglio refers to as our conceptualization of "non-animate entities" (Broglio). Broglio acknowledges the inherent language trap in the conversational norms of our culture when it comes to discussing architecture, noting that when we refer to objects there is almost always an insinuation of lack of consciousness. Referencing Alfred North Whitehead's twentieth-century philosophy, Broglio instead proposes that we approach the buildings around us with the question "What is it fit for here?" which is reflective of Barad's concept of posthuman performativity that addresses entities in a dynamic context rather than static space (Broglio).

Utilizing this proposition, we can begin to examine how Jackson characterizes Hill House through two separate lenses: a representational, static perspective, and a performative, "what is it fit for here?" perspective. These two analyses lay the groundwork for understanding what makes Hill House, as its residents term it, "vile"

and "diseased" (Jackson 264), and for an alternative consideration of Hill House's character as an effective literary device poised to critique representationalism. First, from a representational perspective that perpetually expects Hill House to remain static and subjugated, much of what makes the House disturbing has less to do with a clear threat of bodily harm and more to do with intellectual or emotional discomfort. This begs the question of how Jackson's human characters discover that Hill House is, in fact, haunted and at the very least, severely disconcerting to their worldview.

Jackson's novel centers on a relatively small cast of characters. Dr. Montague is the catalyzing figure for her story, a Doctor of Philosophy and anthropology who is fixated on researching the supernatural by finding an "honestly haunted house" (Jackson 243). He sends a slew of intentionally vague letters to candidates he believes would be qualified to assist in his research and receives only two affirmative responses. One is Eleanor Vance, who at the age of twelve had an odd encounter with stones raining on the ceiling of her house out of nowhere and Dr. Montague believes is perhaps herself haunted by a poltergeist. The other is Theodora, an artist whom Dr. Montague believes has telepathic abilities. Finally, the owners of the house require a member of the family to be there which ends up falling on the shoulders of Luke Sanderson, a charismatic but sticky-fingered young socialite (Jackson 245-247). Alongside the house's caretakers, the Dudleys, who never stay after dark, the crew's goal is to simply live in the house for a period and observe its behavior. This crew of characters all find themselves distinctly disturbed by Hill House, which raises the question of why.

There are three elements of Hill House that are the central culprits of its disconcerting nature and each can be tied back to ways it defies traditional, anthropocentric expectations of buildings. These elements are its design, its navigability, and its spirits. In its design, although it takes Eleanor, our narrator, a few chapters to learn why Hill House feels so off-kilter, immediately upon entrance to the house she understands that something is wrong. She promptly describes the building as "a house arrogant and hating … a house without kindness, never meant to be lived in, not a fit place for people or for love or for hope" (Jackson 265). She struggles to even process its architectural design beyond it being "enormous and dark" which the reader learns is an intentional aspect of Hill House's construction (Jackson 265). Dr. Montague later enlightened the group that Hugh Crain, Hill House's builder and first owner, pictured it one day being a showplace of odd design and thus chose to make every angle of the building "slightly wrong" (Jackson 316). Tilted windows, an offset veranda, doorways intentionally off-center, and asymmetrically placed rooms; this information makes Eleanor, Theodora, and Luke visibly uncomfortable (Jackson 316). Odd interior design choices like giant statues and strangely colored rooms further contribute to their discomfort (Jackson 217-218). Western representationalism firmly associates beauty, convention, and proportionality in architecture with goodness and morality (Matek). By breaking these representational rules, despite posing very little real threat to the safety of its inhabitants in this way, Hill House "stands as a visual reminder of the fact that evil is 'out of scale,' or more specifically, that it shapes itself according to a scale – and a (meta)physics – both inscrutable and repulsive to humans" (Matek).

Not at all secondary to Hill House's distorted designs are its navigability and spirits. Eleanor, Theodora, Luke, and occasionally Dr. Montague seem to be perpetually turned around in Hill House. There are two reasons for this; first, some rooms like the kitchen have multiple doors all leading to the same place, and secondly, Hill House's rooms are layered (Jackson 320). The doctor describes them as "concentric circles" where a ring of outer rooms allows exit from the house and a ring of inner rooms only leads to outer rooms (Jackson 312). This constant confusion leads to an air of unpredictability about Hill House, which stands in stark juxtaposition to Dr. Montague and the company's goal in the house which is collecting ordered scientific evidence. Matek notes that this reads as an intentional choice on Jackson's part, calling into consideration how intertwined Western humanism is with ideas like order and consistency- so intertwined that its disruption is horrific. The spirits of Hill House, similarly, are unpredictable; they bang on doors, move objects around, brush up against Eleanor, and speak to her, all of which are posited as deeply disturbing to the characters even though Theodora notes the spirits have never hurt them (Jackson 384). They show up at inconsistent hours and follow no set conventions of behavior which is disturbing despite their lack of actual physical malice.

These characteristics of Hill House are both what makes it haunted and a cultural critique. Through its design, navigability, and spirits that reside in the building, Hill House "ceases to be a home, a place of safety, and becomes instead an oppressive, claustrophobic space" which, through its unpredictable nature, also ceases to conform to traditional definitions of a non-animate object (Matek). Jackson's construction of sentience, also called Hill House's personality, offers

commentary on both representationalism and anthropocentrism. First, recalling Barad's description of representational rhetoric as firmly distinguishing between the human and non-human, it becomes evident that Hill House confronts this ideology head-on. It is a character as much as Eleanor or Theodora is which is explained by Eggener as a house that "all but built itself and determined its own evil nature, independent of human intent or action." Not only does Hill House display sentience typically reserved for humans in representational framing, but it torments its residents responsively to their actions, defying actor/object acted upon distinctions and instead becoming with its inhabitants. Matek details that Dr. Montague's warnings about anyone wandering off alone can be read as a "warning against the influence of the house's negative energy and its transformative effect rather than a mere warning against getting physically lost."

The assemblage between Hill House and the doctor's crew distinctly decenters the human. Matek attributes the entire unsettling effect of Hill House to its "human characteristics." Anthropocentrism would quite logically purport anything non-human exerting what is representationally reserved for humans over humans themselves as a threat. Through Eleanor's narration, in particular, we watch the house's apparent subversion of her free will. She speaks without remembering what she has said or who she has spoken to (Jackson 408). Eventually, Hill House's eradication of her rational thought drives her to her death thinking "*Why* am I doing this? Why am I doing this? Why don't they stop me?" (Jackson 417). Despite this physically violent conclusion to Jackson's story, "Hill House lacks any apparent or understandable motive for wanting to scare, imprison, or kill its tenants" (Matek). The terror and control Hill House exerts

over its subjects is, more than anything else, rooted in a lack of human control and ability to be comprehended.

If representationalism and anthropocentrism are the ideologies that make Hill House so disturbing, it begs consideration whether there is a version of Jackson's story with a less tragic ending. If the house were not expected to be domestic and submissive in order to be a desirable space, and instead our culture shifted to be more accepting of becoming with spaces rather than controlling them, Hill House would be much less horrifying and perhaps simply curious. While buildings may, at their most basic level, be bricks and mortar that do not and perhaps cannot want anything , they are only these elements in a vacuum. In real life, nothing is ever truly in a vacuum (Eggener). Accepting this necessary interaction and intra-action between spaces and their people as they assemble together allows the exploration of an exciting philosophical concept; a house's status as haunted has very little to do with evil and much more to do with a personal relationship to the house.

Hill House, when examined through a posthuman lens, offers a powerful incentive to reconsider how we relate to the places we call home. Beyond simple representationalism subjecting houses to our Western conceptualizations of what it means to be non-human, our anthropocentric expectations of the domesticity and safety of a home to be tied to its submissiveness have clear patriarchal undertones. Questioning these assumptions is more than just an entertaining thought experiment, it is good and necessary in a larger-scale reevaluation of Western social structures. Our dwelling places inevitably act on us, Western culture simply does not ask us to consider these actions. When a piece of stained glass raises thoughts about old spiritual beliefs or

when a worn-in room carries the ghost of a loved one in its arrangement, we are becoming with our homes in the same fashion that Hill House became with its inhabitants- they involuntarily affect us. This becoming-with, this "absent presence that occasionally [makes] itself felt" may be disturbing, but to the same extent, it may be what makes our spaces meaningful (Toso).

Our involuntary, associative memories create haunted spaces all around us and ought to remind us of the challenges even bricks and mortar can raise to anthropocentrism. Toso suggests that as we consider our relationships with the haunted places we move through, we remain open, curious, and reflective about the assemblages we enter into. If Hill House is any indication of the consequences of an unwillingness to release representational anthropocentrism in favor of open-mindedness, it is a stark warning. Haunting is not a thing to be mapped or quantified- it may well drive one to madness in the attempt to do so. Haunting is, rather, something of "no fixed essence or substance simply there for the measuring," as Barad notes in her work on the quantum elements of spirits and specters (*Quantum Entanglements*). Jackson uses the space the Gothic genre makes through horror as a vehicle for counter-cultural ideas to ask readers whether the haunting is horrible of its own volition or because of human perception. Hill House is a home that "[rears] its great head back against the sky without concession to humanity" (Jackson 265). Jackson's work, through a critical posthuman examination, proffers the idea that releasing our expectations of buildings to bow in concession to humanity's whims could fundamentally alter how we relate to haunted houses for the better.

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Beowulf as Germanic Mythological Canon

Theodore Lin

The world of *Beowulf* is one guarded by heavenly powers and fraught with monsters: giants of frost, beasts of the deep, of fire. The supernatural is a theme that is ever-present in the poem, a narrative that is as foundational to the genre of high fantasy as it is to English literature as a whole. However, the mythological and theological sources of *Beowulf's* spirituality remain in burning debate among scholars of Old English. Much extant literature views *Beowulf* as a Christian allegory, composed by a Christian poet, deriding the Heathenistic lifestyles of both the Anglo-Saxons and the Norse; however, the Christian moralism of the poem is greatly overstated. *Beowulf* should instead be interpreted as a work influenced primarily by the shared literary traditions of medieval Germanic Europe (subsequently "Paganism," "Pagan mythology," etc.). While Christianity and Christian themes do, indeed, feature prominently in the poem, linguistic and textual analyses, along with historical contextualization nonetheless demonstrate the importance of Paganism in *Beowulf,* and more broadly in the early medieval Germanic world.

The Christianization of England occurred, without a doubt, in the mid- to late 600s; however, Christianization cannot so easily be synonymized with the sudden and

complete disappearance of Pagan traditions. There is no mention of Jesus in *Beowulf*, and, beyond that, very little indication of salvation. The reader is left presuming—grasping at—any revelations of the "Christian truth," even if such were the intention of the poem's author (hereby simply "the Poet"). "No serious attempts," notes archaeologist, historian, and literary scholar Bo Gräslund, "[are made] to transform the highly pagan funerals of Hnæf, Beowulf, and Scyld into Christian observances" (68), events which seem perfectly suitable for pontification. Moreover, kingdom- or statewide Christianization (conversions "by royal decree") do not straightforwardly justify the assignment of religious belief to the Poet—nor to any other author in conversion-age northern Europe. Acts of religious conformity, namely the insertion of Christian elements into otherwise non-religious literature, were not at all abnormal in early medieval Northern Europe. For instance, *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* en *mesta* ("the Greatest Saga of Ólafr Tryggvason," hereby *ÓsTm*), compiled in the fourteenth century, recounts the historical poet Hallfreðr Óttarsson's reluctant adoption of Christianity at the behest of his patron, the Norwegian king Óláfr. However, his conversion is seen as an act of adhesion to the king's orders rather than of truthful religious reconstruction, as the Christian Ólafr considers Hallfreðr's skaldic poetry to be pagan and problematic (hence his courtly nickname, Hallfreðr *vandræðaskáld:* "Hallfreðr the troublesome poet"). Analyzing this dynamic, Christopher Abram, a scholar of Old English and Norse literature, observes that "the Christian [education] ... [Hallfreðr] has learned is not especially *skáldligr* [("poetic")], and thus may be abandoned if his own poetic art is denied an audience and his social function negated. His cultural identity takes precedence over his religious identity" (129). In medieval Germanic Europe,

conversion—and the apparent subsequent Christianization of converts' literature may be seen as an assimilatory cultural concession rather than a changing spiritual belief: more so regulation than revelation. Thus, the mere presence of Christian ideas within *Beowulf* is no reason to assign the poem the label of a "Christian epic."

Scholarship on the subject of the poem's religiosity remains divided and inconclusive. Joseph St. John, a scholar of Old English literature and Christian apocrypha, advocates for a Cain-and-Abel reading of the poem, arguing that Beowulf's post-mortem decapitation of Grendel "conveys the theme of fratricide through its Cainite associations," and furthermore that it may explain why Beowulf, painfully unaware of the heavenly repercussions for his actions, "is unable to address the [threats] that beset the societies he seeks to protect, even where he rids them of their monstrous antagonists" (58). According to St. John, a Christian moral is provided through Beowulf's dramatically ironic inability to connect his own immoral behavior to the Biblical tragedy of Cain. Contrast this reading with that of Tom Grant, a researcher of Old Norse poetry, who assumes a folkloric lens in paralleling this same episode in *Beowulf* and a similar episode in a medieval Norse epic, *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar* (hereby *HsG)* to the story of Polyphemus from the Greek *Odyssey*. Grant notes that "[t]he Polyphemus tradition exerted much influence on Old Norse … and medieval European literature more widely" (9) and concludes that both Polyphemus's blinding by Odysseus and the giant Grímnir's blinding at the hand of Hrólf Gautreksson in *HsG* are "'blind motif[s]' related to Beowulf's decapitation of Grendel" (12–13). Per Grant, the *Odyssey* represents a Greek pagan source for two (likewise pagan) North Germanic *sagas,* whereupon the appearance of Christianity is but a derived cultural accessory—an

addendum—to fundamentally mythic, rather than moral, tales. Ultimately, though, considering the caution that should be taken in assigning phylogenies to literary and oral traditions, the varying expert opinions on *Beowulf's* religious and spiritual inspirations, and the scarcity of related archaeological evidence, the ephemeral subtleties behind the poem may simply, sufferingly, be lost to history. Modern scholars must instead rely upon comparative studies of related literature, exhaustive combing of the original text, linguistic analysis, and, indeed, an educated dose of inference to ascertain any meaningful conclusions about *Beowulf's raisons d'être.*

The Poet was not whatsoever concerned, it appears, with using God's name in vain. Moreover, these mentions—over seventy, perhaps sparing some *hapax legomena*— vary widely in religiosity, from the overtly Biblical, to the theologically generic, to the highly interpretable. Upon scrutiny of both the original verse and Seamus Heaney's modern translation, it becomes apparent that the Poet's frequent, and etymologically variable, references to a higher power serve a purpose beyond simply indicating the divine—beyond calling upon God. Indeed, both texts modify the name of this higher power extensively to suit the needs of the poem's alliterative structure, less so to invoke the power itself. For example, Heaney's translation of "*Cain's clan,* whom *the Creator* had outlawed / and condemned as outcasts" *(Beowulf* trans. Heaney 106–07, my emphasis) cites this higher power as "the Creator" in order to alliterate with "Cain's clan." The Poet does likewise, writing "sipðan him *Scyppend* for*scrifen* hæfde / in *Caines cynne*—þone *cwealm* gewræc..." *(Beowulf* 106-07, my emphasis). Of the multifarious names given for God, the Poet selects "Scyppend," translating to "Creator"—not simply "God," despite the Old English equivalent, similarly "God,"

appearing on multiple instances—to conform to the alliterated phoneme ƒ (represented orthographically in Old English as "sc"). Heaney mimics this, choosing "Creator," in line with his alliteration of the letter C: insofar as he rearranges the lines in the process. Thus, despite the various epithets available for a deity—some more direct than others—the Poet and Heaney select "Scyppend" and "Creator," respectively, in order to align with the alliterative scheme, rather than to cooperate with the specific honorific of the Christian God required *in situ*. The Poet exhibits a relative unconcern as to God's proper title, particularly conspicuous in an early passage in which the narrator describes the Shieldings as heathenfolk. He writes,

> *Metod* hīe ne cūþon,
>
> dæda *Dēmend*,   ne wiston hīe *Drihten God*
>
> nē hīe hūru *heofena Helm*
>
> herian ne cūþon,
>
> *wuldres Waldend*.
>
> .   .   .   .
>
> ...*Drihten* sēcean
>
> ond tō *Fæder* fæþmum freoðo wilnian!
>
> *(Beowulf* 180-183, 187-188, my emphasis)

Within the confines of six lines of verse, the poet cycles through the words "Metod," "Dēmend," "Drihten," "God," "heofena Helm," "wuldres Waldend," and "Fæder" (respectively, "maker," "Judge," "Lord," "God," "Head of Heaven," "glorious Almighty One," and "Father") to describe God. Quite manifestly, it must be said, this is done to

adhere to prosodic rules, rather than to illustrate any significant difference in meaning between the terms.

The alliterative context in which a higher power is denoted in *Beowulf* is essential to understanding the markedly Christian way in which these terms are translated by Heaney—as, thereby, they mistakenly become indicators of the poem's supposed Christian connotations. For example, Heaney derives the term "God of Ages" in "May the God of Ages continue to keep and requite you well" *(Beowulf* trans. Heaney 954–55) from the Old English "Al-walda" *(Beowulf* 955), simply meaning "all-ruler" conceivably, even, the explicitly Norse "Allfather," (Sturluson trans. Brodeur 34) in reference to Óðinn. "God of Ages," it is important to note, conforms doubly to the alliterative scheme: "...by your glorious *a*ction. May the *G*od of *A*ges..." *(Beowulf* trans. Heaney 954, my emphasis), one of many instances in which Heaney values prosody over theology. It is evident, therefore, that Heaney's chosen translations for a higher power, most of which are decidedly Christian in nature, do not reflect the Poet's belief in the Christian God so much as they act as liaisons for the modern reader (the modern, *Western* reader) to understand the Poet's complex, syncretic spirituality—and all this, colored by the strict confines of alliteration.

The Poet undeniably holds some syncretic, if not outright Pagan, spiritual beliefs. Whether these beliefs signify "true religion," in the modern sense of the term, or "myths and folklore," which lie in the muddled middle of fact and faith, is unclear. It is incontestable, however, that Paganism features extensively throughout *Beowulf,* indicating at the very least a sociocultural milieu in which Paganism and Pagan tales were easily recognizable and familiar to the Poet's audience. Grendel, for instance, is

characterized as a member of the "ogres and elves and evil phantoms / and the giants too who strove with God" *(Beowulf* trans. Heaney 112-13) — in the original verse, these are "eotenas," "ylfe," "orcneas," and "gīgantas" *(Beowulf* 112-13). The use of the word "eotenas," in particular, attracts attention due to its translation to Old Norse as *jötnar*, a race of frost giants who feature as the main antagonists of many Norse myths. While Heaney's translation of "ogres" is passable (conducive, it must be said, to the modern English reader's understanding), the link to Old Norse *jötnar* is infinitely more direct and highlights the extent to which Paganism influenced not only the Poet, but Anglo-Saxon language and culture as a whole during the early Middle Ages.

The *jötnar* of *Beowulf* engender much description and backstory, most of which is borrowed from Norse mythology. Etched upon Grendel's Mother's sword, for example, is an engraving describing "the flood [which] destroyed the tribe of giants" *(Beowulf* trans. Heaney 1690), an event which may, to a Western audience, evoke the flood of Genesis; however, it in fact more closely parallels the Norse flood myth, in which the blood of Ymir, the first *jötunn*, is spilled by Óðinn and his brothers, causing a deluge which kills all but one pair of his *jötnar* descendents (Sturluson trans. Brodeur 20). Additionally, the dragon of *Beowulf* possesses a "huge cache [of] gold inherited / from an ancient race" *(Beowulf* trans. Heaney 3050–51). This "ancient race" conjures images of the primeval *jötnar* and their materially rich realm of *Jötunheim*, where "Leashes of gold [are] laid for... dogs" ("Thrymskvitha" trans. Bellows 176). The Poet seamlessly incorporates all manner of Norse myths in his construction of a new, syncretic narrative—yet the footprint of these Pagan traditions is nonetheless apparent.

The influence of these myths, furthermore, is not confined to the narrator's retellings of them; the three monsters of *Beowulf* also suggest likenesses in Norse mythology. Firstly, the dragon, or *wyrm,* is a recurring motif in Germanic folklore—as is the sword, often magical, used in its slaying. Most eminent among the dragons of Pagan tradition is Fáfnir, slain by the remarkably Beowulf-like hero Sigurð the Völsung in the *Völsunga Saga (The Saga* of *the Völsungs* trans. Finch 31), and indeed, Siguro's son Sigemund is even mentioned in *Beowulf* with the description, "Sigemund's exploits, / all of those many feats and marvels, the struggles and wandering of Waels's [(Old English for Völsung's)] son" *(Beowulf* trans. Heaney 875-76). Additionally, Grendel, as heretofore explained, is openly described as a *jötunn*—by extension, so too is his Mother. Grendel's Mother, though, shares more affinities with the Norse *jötnar* narratives. In fact, she draws many interesting analogues with the *jötunn* Angrboða, wife of Loki and spawner of monsters. In the Norse tradition, Angrboða, "the giantess old / [who] in Ironwood [(a region of *Jötunheim*)] sat" ("Voluspo" trans. Bellows 18), births three monsters: the ungodly strong wolf, Fenrir; the serpent, Jörmungandr, who encircles the mortal realm; and Hel, the ruler of the underworld (Sturluson trans. Brodeur 43). Grendel's Mother is similarly matronly and troll-like, and furthermore, she resides in a seemingly inaccessible realm beneath a lake—*Jötunheim* is likewise characterized as a realm typically impassable to humans (Heide 118). While the comparison is not immaculate, the multifold similarities between the two motherly trolls is notable, and useful in dissecting the undoubtedly Pagan mythological pool from which the Poet may have drawn inspiration.

Not only does *Beowulf* borrow motifs and characters from Pagan folk tales, but it also resembles them in form. *Beowulf* is a classical example of the *fornaldarsaga,* a semi-fictional "saga of an ancient time," a style typical of the poem's Norse antecedents and contemporaries. Indeed, Gräslund arrives at the surprising conclusion that "Middle Iron Age [Scandinavian literature], such as *[fornaldarsögur]* and early eddic poems...have greater similarities to Beowulf than to late Old Norse poetry" (6). The *fornaldarsögur* are ubiquitous in the mythology of Northern Europe. In one such tale, the goddess Gefjon and her oxen offspring carve Zealand out of the Danish Sea (Sturluson trans. Brodeur 14)—this legend, and many comparable others, are all structured in the *Gylfaginning* as a recitation of the Creation story by the gods to Gylfi, the first king of Sweden. Another *fornaldarsaga* tells of Skjöldr, the legendary first king of Denmark, who appears in *Beowulf* as Shield Sheafson *(Beowulf* trans. Heaney 4). This same Skjöldr is a descendent of Sceafa, king of the Lombards, who according to Germanic legend, washed ashore on a wooden skiff as a baby. Despite, or perhaps in *union with,* its frequent Christian imagery, the poem is unmistakably a product of this same literary culture, from its depiction of great, inhuman monsters, defeated in dazzling shows of strength, to its insistence on family ties—for, as we are reminded many times, he is Beowulf, "Hygelac's kinsman"; Beowulf, "Ecgtheow's son" *(Beowulf* trans. Heaney 407, 529). Its concluding lines are moreso a summary of events than a review of lessons learned: "They said that of all the kings upon the earth/ [Beowulf] was the man most gracious and fair-minded, / kindest to his people and keenest to win fame" *(Beowulf* trans. Heaney 3180-82). The mythological inspirations for the poem therefore lie in the ancient oral traditions of the Germanic peoples. Furthermore, the

Poet is intimately familiar with these folk tales and is willing to adapt them—on occasion syncretically with Biblical stories—into *Beowulf,* a uniquely Anglo-Saxon *fornaldarsaga.*

The gods of Ásgarðr, as told by the Norse, are very much unlike the Christian God, in that they bicker constantly; wage war; fall in and out of love; are, on occasion, tragically flawed or outright foolish. *Beowulf's* amoral, biographical qualities, which draw similarities to the early medieval *fornaldarsögur*, place it firmly within this Pagan conception of religion. Indeed, despite the ever-presence of Christian ideas within the text of the poem, they are never conferred in a manner indicative of any strong Christian zeal on the part of the Poet. The description "the Lord was weaving a victory on His war-loom for the Weather-Geats" *(Beowulf* trans. Heaney 696-97), for instance, is more reminiscent of a pre-Christian war-god—Ares, perhaps, or Þórr—than the God of the New Testament. These Biblicisms instead indicate a society steeped in the historical fantasy tradition of the Pagans being introduced to (from their perspective) an intriguing new mythology, not necessarily a strict, reverend religion deserving of piety and moralist fable-crafting. Consider Hrothgar's assurance that "hīe *wyrd* forswēop / on Grendles gryre. *God* ēaþe mæg þone dol-sceaðan dæda getwæfan!" *(Beowulf* 477–479, my emphasis), translated by Heaney as *"fate* sweeps them away / into Grendel's clutches— / but *God* can easily halt these raids and harrowing attacks!" (477–479). This affirmation represents a point of claustrophobic proximity between Pagan *wyrd* and Christian God. In a Christian reading of the poem, it follows that the former should be subservient to the latter, that fate should be under God's control; however, as historian and anthropologist David Pedersen notes, "the god of line 478 is not working through

wyrd but in opposition to it, and the implication is that, unless god intervenes, wyrd will continue to sweep away the guards" (736). God, therefore, is not the only supernatural actor of *Beowulf*. He is but a co-opted, syncretic extension of the Poet's Pagan pantheon of gods, ghouls, giants, and monsters—likewise locked in a battle of rulership over the snow-covered lands of the North.

Regardless of these many parallels, it behooves the modern *Beowulf* scholar to be conservative in drawing direct analogies between the poem and other Pagan literary works. Indeed, to confabulate a parent-offspring relationship between, for instance, the *Völsunga Saga* and *Beowulf* would require extraordinary linguistic and literary evidence, which simply does not exist. Magnús Fjalldal, medieval studies researcher and professor of English at the University of Iceland, urges caution in concluding such one-to-one analogies. He acknowledges the Germanic origins of *Beowulf's* monsters; however, he refrains from assigning the poem any direct Norse parallel or phyletic cousin, writing that "a single [Old Norse] story ... cannot as an analogue do justice to the numerous other features from Old Norse literature that also have their counterparts in the make-up of [the poem's] monsters" (546). Nonetheless, the extent to which the characters in *Beowulf* are clearly inspired by figures in the broader Pagan pantheon—and moreover the extent to which traditional Pagan characters such as *jötnar* and the Völsungs appear in *Beowulf* themselves—is indicative of the pronounced sociocultural, or folk-spiritual, position Germanic myths occupied within the Poet's imagination. *Beowulf* is not a Christian Anglo-Saxon palimpsest of these works; rather, it is a continuation of the *fornaldarsaga* genre by a people group sharing a common cultural heritage with the Norse. Additionally, the variable degree of Christianization seen in the

Eddas, the *Völsunga Saga*, *ÓsTm*, *HsG*, *Beowulf*, and similar works does not preclude any of them from categorization within the set of Pagan historical fantasies, so much as it may simply illustrate the shifting sociocultural landscape of early medieval Northern Europe. Indications of the Poet's participation in the broader Pagan literary tradition (namely, the tradition's influence on the poem's characters, plot, and structure, as above demonstrated) may therefore overshadow the tenuous assumption of his Christian piety—for which evidence owes solely to his Anglo-Saxon background and their contemporaneous conversion "by royal decree."

Interpretations of *Beowulf* vary widely due to the chasm of chronological and cultural space separating the Poet from the modern day. Thus, no contemporary reading may ever provide justice as to the true intentions of *Beowulf's* creator, altogether alien as they may seem now. So it goes with literature: a constantly evolving conversation between temporal Author and temporal Reader. Something is lost in translation, with the ever-barging flood of time—words, ideas, *feelings*, too, sunken in the jet-black deep of antiquity. Yet: clouded, buried as these morsels of meaning may be within the recesses of that impenetrable deep, it is vital in the utmost to conceive of them—as we are able to—beyond the colored lenses of modern thinking. While *Beowulf* contains many references to Christianity and Christian thought, the poem nonetheless represents, beyond the modern preconception, a Pagan work infused with elements of the Christian religious and mythological tradition. Moreover, works within the established North Germanic canon closely mirror *Beowulf,* the *fornaldarsaga*, and its grandiose hero's tale. These historical comparisons, alongside linguistic and textual analyses of the poem, reveal the incomplete nature of the Poet's conversion. His

uncanny familiarity with Germanic mythology; his casual, near sacrilegious, willingness to transfuse Pagan and Christian: these narrative elements emphasize the characterization of the Poet as a "true Christian," turning his nose at the Old Beliefs. Thus, it is the responsibility of the contemporary reader to consider *Beowulf* as a Germanic mythological epic informed by Christianity, rather than to disregard it as mere Christian allegory—so much as the latter may be pertinent, low-hanging, in the modern Western world.

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Kafka and the Machine: Irrationality as Nightmare in "In the Penal Colony"

Catherine Maund

In beholding the literary genius of Czech existentialist writer Franz Kafka, Russian-American novelist Vladimir Nabokov once remarked that "the limpidity of his style stresses the dark richness of fantasy. Contrast and unity, style and matter, manner and plot are most perfectly integrated" (Nabokov). In other words, the clarity and straightforwardness of Kafka's prose juxtaposed with the surreal and fantastical elements of his stories enhances the nightmarish thematic quality that characterizes his oeuvre. "The Metamorphosis" is a short story that portrays the aftermath of a traveling salesman who wakes up one morning to find himself transformed into a giant, grotesque bug. The act of waking up as an insect is horrifying in itself but what makes "The Metamorphosis" truly nightmarish is found in its absence of rationality. Kafka offers no rational, comprehensible explanation as to why this freakish transformation has taken place and this lack of logical rigor contrasted with the pellucidity of his prose amplifies how these events are being presented without reason. Similarly, his short story "In the Penal Colony" follows this narrative technique. On July 3, 1883, Franz Kafka was born into a world in which the penal colony was the leading body of punitive justice. Through brutally illogical disciplinary measures, irrational attitudes of adherence to traditions,

and theatrical gestures of punitive justice, "In the Penal Colony" seeks to convey Kafka's critiques of the colonial enterprise in a fantastical tale.

In continuity with the nightmarish existentialism of "The Metamorphosis," "In the Penal Colony" can ultimately be understood as an interrogation of systems of bureaucracy. The story begins in a remote tropical penal colony where a law enforcement officer prepares a mechanical execution device intended to be publicly utilized on a condemned man in the ensuing hours of the day. The officer, beholding its technological sophistication, narrates the mechanisms of the device to a visiting explorer who is to witness the scheduled public execution alongside the officer. The process shows that the condemned man is laid naked on a bed and firmly belted by his hands, legs, and throat. Then, an assemblage of razor-sharp needles is to descend upon him and carve into his skin, where they will work in a coordinated motion to inscribe the man's sentence on his flesh. The condemned man, a prisoner of the penal colony, is to be executed on the allegation of verbally threatening his master, and for this reason, the words "Honor Your Superiors" will be diced into him incessantly for of twelve hours until he dies from his injuries. The explorer, appealing to his more liberal, humanitarian sensibilities, asks the officer if the condemned man is aware of his impending fate, and is surprised to learn that not only is the prisoner oblivious to the forthcoming punishment, but he has also not been informed that he has been accused, let alone convicted, of a crime. The officer explains that, according to his philosophy, judicial procedure ought to follow a single basic principle: guilt is always beyond doubt. Moreover, the officer maintains that following the meticulous protocols of conventional

due process is too energy-expending for a situation where the presumption is that the accused will lie indefinitely:

> If I had first summoned the man and interrogated him, the result would have been confusion. He would have lied, and if I had been successful in refuting his lies, he would have replaced them with new lies, and so forth. But now I have him, and I won't release him again. Now, does that clarify everything? But time is passing. We should be starting the execution, and I haven't finished explaining the apparatus yet. (Kafka 6)

The officer is unapologetically more fascinated with the mechanics of the device and the theatric public torture it oversees than judicial procedure, and his morbid fanaticism is juxtaposed with the reserved temperament of the ruminative explorer. The function of the explorer is to perform gestures of liberal, ethical concern. His presence serves as a contrast between the enlightened humanism of the early 20th century and the brutal, hierarchical world of colonialism. Although the explorer may be equipped with the Western humanist rationale that he uses to interrogate the ethics of the penal colony, he is not witnessing a medieval ritual of primitive, faraway people. The explorer, as author Allen Thiher puts it, can be understood as "a liberal who views the foundations of his own civilization" (Thiher 273). Thus, the explorer is only witnessing an alternative demonstration of Western judicial practices but in an excruciatingly vivid, immediate form. The explorer and his liberal concern directed towards liberalism is irrational, and this challenges the presumption that colonialism is grounded in reason. The stage of the penal colony operates as a world in which the irrationality of imperial enterprise is visualized.

"In the Penal Colony" was written in the bottleneck of a period that historians frequently refer to as The Age of New Imperialism, which was defined by the militaristic expansion of colonial territories on an industrialized scale and motivated by the acquisition of political dominance, economic interests, and made possible by developments in technology. One of the defining monuments erected in the dawn of this period was the dissemination of social Darwinist ideas, which derive from the theory that "human groups and races are subject to the same laws of natural selection as Charles Darwin perceived in plants and animals in nature" ("social Darwinism"). Within the penal colony, the influence of social Darwinism within colonial structures finds its expression through the uncompromising, cartoonishly brutal implementations of social hierarchy. The officer represents the ultimate governing authority, and the condemned man represents the weak governed within the social Darwinist framework. The juxtaposition between the officer's military uniform and the condemned man, who has been stripped of all clothing aside from chains strapped to his neck, wrists, and feet, is a visualization of such a concept. As scholar Margaret Kohn writes in her essay "Kafka's Critique of Colonialism," "The military uniform, typically contrasted with native nakedness, is one of the tropes of savagery and civilization. The uniform symbolizes civilization and therefore the legitimacy of the colonial project" (Kohn). The aesthetic dominance established by the military uniform is integral to maintaining the veneer of social Darwinism, thus externally validating the social mythology of the penal colony. Despite the physical inconvenience of wearing a wool-blend military uniform in a tropical environment, the officer deems it a necessary and commemorative act. "But they [the uniforms] mean home," the officer says, "and we don't want to lose our

homeland" (Kafka 1). Wearing a heavy military uniform in the tropics, despite its practical absurdity, to impose symbolic domination is nightmarish because it is significant to the penal colony's pursuit of brutality that defies rationality.

These cultural signifiers are in service to an additional facet of colonialism that Kafka sought to critique, which is an unwavering adherence to tradition, no matter how unnecessary and irrational. Throughout the story, the officer makes references to the former Commandant of the penal colony, with whom he shared a love for ritualistic disciplinary public spectacle. The apparatus was the invention of the Old Commandant, and for that reason, the officer holds a deep reverence for him. The New Commandant, however, does not hold the apparatus in the same high regard, and his inattentiveness to the maintenance of the machine has allowed it to fall deeper into a state of disrepair, which the officer mourns throughout the story. The New Commandant, the officer explains, has invited the explorer to view the execution to expose a neutral, enlightened observer to the barbaric traditions of the old administration:

> But my guess is that with you he is exposing me to the judgment of a respected
>
> foreigner. He calculates things with care. You are now on your second day on the
>
> island. You didn't know the Old Commandant and his way of thinking. You are
>
> trapped in a European way of seeing things. Perhaps you are fundamentally
>
> opposed to the death penalty in general and to this kind of mechanical style of
>
> execution in particular. (Kafka 11)

At the end of "In the Penal Colony", the officer becomes entangled in the machine, and eventually submits himself as a victim to its procedure. The Old Commandant vested the officer in the duty of judge, jury, and executioner, for he was the last vocal proponent of

the apparatus and its judicial necessity. As the officer dies at the hands of the apparatus that he once revered, the archaic traditions of the old administration die with him. If the apparatus symbolizes dogmatic loyalty to traditions, then the death of the officer is Kafka's warning of the perils that await those who blindly adhere to traditions without ethical interrogation, and that fruitlessly maintaining systems that can no longer withstand their intended use leads to inevitable collapse.

At the beginning of the story, the officer narrates the public executions that the old administration hosted for the residents of the penal colony:

> The Commandant, in his wisdom, arranged that the children should be taken care of before all the rest. Naturally, I was always allowed to stand close by, because of my official position. Often I crouched down there with two small children in my arms, on my right and left. How we all took in the expression of transfiguration on the martyred face! How we held our cheeks in the glow of justice, mainly attained and already passing away! What times we had, my friend. (Kafka 10)

This type of spectacle is a quintessential representative case of 20th-century French philosopher Michel Foucault's concept of disciplinary power (Tulley 26). Disciplinary power, as defined by Foucault, can be understood as the coercive measures deployed to adjust and supervise the conduct and behavior of individuals and collectives. Thus, Kafka's apparatus, with its panoptic spectacle of torture, can be understood as a paradigmatic manifestation of disciplinary power. In his 1975 book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault writes on the act of torture:

> "The body, several times tortured, provides the synthesis of the reality of the deeds and the truth of the investigation, of the documents of the case and the statements of the criminal, of the crime and the punishment. It is an essential element, therefore, in a penal liturgy, in which it must serve as the partner of a procedure ordered around the formidable rights of the sovereign, the prosecution and secrecy. (Foucault 47)

The body as a synthesis of reality is an integral aspect of the mythology of the apparatus. The words "Honor Your Superiors" simultaneously consist of a simple command, an exercise of power, and an assessment of character. These words are insisted upon the condemned man, carved into his very flesh. When inscribed on the body, they cannot be debated or waved away through a procedure of due process. The apparatus allots the ultimate, final judgment. It is legible, dictatorial, and permanent. Kafka's apparatus is the model signifier for the theatrics of penal punitive justice, for its judgment externally validates both the guilt of the condemned and the legitimacy of the penal authority.

Kafka's penal colony is built on a theater of disciplinary spectacle, symbolic signifiers of dominance, and the irrational commemorative acts deemed necessary to maintain the social mythology of penal authority. Kafka's apparatus functions as the inanimate personification of the disciplinary exercises that enforce these hierarchical systems, such as those seen in social Darwinist thought. "In the Penal Colony" is a cautionary tale against the self-destructing systems of punishment that require such aimless brutality and performative upkeep, and an encouragement to interrogate the ethical underpinnings of our collective conception of punitive justice. If a nightmare is but a fantastical projection of one's fears, then "In the Penal Colony" is a disturbing

embodiment of these societal anxieties, a soul-stirring warning of the consequences that lie ahead for those who exercise senseless ruthlessness and irrational attitudes of adherence to tradition.

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The Old Gods of Elizabethan England: Paganism in the *Faerie Queen*

Peter Merrill

For over one thousand years, the word "paganism" has been tacitly understood to describe the religion of the vanquished other. Erroneously portrayed as a monolithic creed that celebrated nature's barbarity, a single derogatory word has been applied to dismiss every system of belief before Christ. It does not matter that the practices of the Aztec civilization had nothing in common with the Baltic Romuva because the pagan had been stripped of his voice and expunged from modern history; paganism became a relic that by definition could not bear on the present. Through this lens, the gods before Christ were reduced to an intricate fiction, a symptom of societies fevered by their proximity to the edge of history. To the mind of medieval monotheists, the only cure for this pagan malady was Christian rationalism, foisted upon Europe under threat of tremendous violence. Brutality could convert the masses, but it could not make them believe, and covert pagan rituals persisted into the high Middle Ages. Only the soft power of narrative, later literature, could contort the peoples' ancestral beliefs into a single creed that could be easily understood, and so easily derided. While many authors of the medieval and Renaissance periods perpetuated the myth that paganism was a cohesive and antiquated creed, Edmund Spenser proved both the diversity and

relevance of disparate pagan religions in book three of *The Faerie Queene*. Spenser invokes Hellenic, Brythonic, and Goidelic paganism to demonize potentially disruptive non-Christian behavior, consolidate Queen Elizabeth I's power in Wales, and legitimize England's territorial ambitions in Ireland respectively.

Hellenic Paganism

Before any interpretation of Spenser's attitudes toward Hellenism, which here refers to the religion of the ancient Greeks and Romans, can be made, one must understand the context in which the poet wrote. Book three of *The Faerie Queene* was penned in 1590 at the height of the English Renaissance, a splinter of the pan-European movement that sought to revitalize and surpass classical learning. For the first time, Christian Europeans attempted to apprehend pagan divinity on its own terms rather than by forcing the old gods into Christian cosmology through the labels "demon" or "saint." Hellenic paganism was acknowledged as distinct from and more cultured than other pagan creeds and interest in the classical gods was fostered rather than punished. With increasing frequency, Hellenic heroes, monsters, and gods were depicted in art. That is not to say that Hellenism revived during the Renaissance; as Paul Robichaud writes, "[b]y interpreting the myths allegorically, [artists] could find spiritual meaning in them without challenging the authority of the church or their own faith" (52). No deity exemplifies Renaissance attitudes toward Hellenic paganism better than Pan, patron of shepherds, reveler among satyrs and nymphs, and muse of many an English poet. Pan became emblematic of the Renaissance conception of Hellenic divinity because of Plutarch's account of the god's death which supposedly ended the pagan age and began the Christian one; Pan became the chief Hellenic god in the Renaissance

imagination both because he was the mirror image of Christ and because his death was supposedly the deciding factor in Hellenism's waning influence (Robichaud 47).

Spenser's characterization of Hellenism is nearly identical to his contemporaries' interpretations of Pan. Both are depicted as full of earthly power but debauched, lecherous, and ultimately lethal to any moral and just society. However, Spenser differed from his peers when conceptualizing the satyr god. While Pan had previously been associated with the horned and hooved devil, Spenser suggested in *The Shepheardes Calendar* that the god was actually Christ (Robichaud 51, 56). Popular conception of Pan as Satan comes into direct conflict with Spenser's mellower interpretation of the god in the battle between Sir Satyrane and the hyena. The scene recalls Pan's pursuit of the nymph Syrinx, who "modelled herself on the goddess Diana / in daily life and by staying chaste" (Ovid, lines 1026-7). While Florimell is a clear allegory for Syrinx, the part of Pan is divided in two; classical, lascivious Pan is represented by the beast while Spenser's innovative idea of Pan is played by Sir Satyrane, the chivalrous son of a satyr (Spenser 127). The only commonality between Satyrane and the beast is their desire for Florimell, though the former pursues her out of love, while the latter acts out of instinct. In Spenser's version of the tale, the maiden does not "call on the nymphs of the stream to transform her [into reeds]," but escapes on her own (Ovid, line 1040). In doing so, she denies her pursuers the gratification that classical Pan enjoyed when he made the Syrinx reeds into a flute and was "Enthralled by the strange new music and sweetness of tone" (Ovid, line 1046). With the maiden out of reach, Spenser can focus his narrative on the contest between the Spenserian Pan and the classical Pan. Though Satyrane prevails, he ultimately fails to constrain the beast,

perhaps an allusion to Spenser's continued antipathy toward paganism (Spenser 164). Spenser may prefer Hellenism to other pagan religions, but he does not ever depict the creed as attaining the perfection reserved for Christianity.

The image, if not the name, of Pan appears in canto ten of *The Faerie Queene*'s book three as Malbecco, the cuckold husband of Helenore, discovers a troop of satyrs consorting with his wife in a glade (Spenser 202). Contrary to what might be expected of a high-ranking medieval woman, Helenore enjoys the satyrs company; she is "embraced of a *Satyre* rough and rude, / who all the night did minde his joyous play: / Nine times [Malbecco] heard him come aloft ere day" (Spenser 201). Malbecco attempts to rescue his wife from the satyrs, "But she it all refused at a word, / And by no meanes would to his will be wonne, / But chose emongst the jolly *Satyres* still to wonne" (Spenser 203). Helenore rejects sterile Christian ideas of femininity by remaining in the glade, but she does not do so just for sexual gratification or liberation from domesticity. In fact, the latter is not accomplished by her escape; even though the satyrs make Helenore their "May-lady," they still expect her "as a housewife ever to abide" (Spenser 198, 200). In this way, the politics of the glade more closely resemble the ancient Greek world. The Greeks brutally oppressed women, but religious sects like the Bacchic cults had the power to liberate, while in the Middle Ages, religion was the chief oppressor (Orlin 192). The glade, over which the Hellenic god Phoebus rather than the sun, sets is the antithesis of the Christian court just as Helenore is opposite of Britomart, Spenser's "flowre of chastity" (Spenser 201, 207). By examining Hellenic spaces and characters in *The Faerie Queene,* Spenser's idea of what Hellenic societies looked like, and the political ramifications of his ideas, can be conjectured.

The glade, while a pagan space, is adulterated by outside influences because Christian characters like Malbecco can intrude on and even blend into the Hellenic throng (Spenser 201). By contrast, the Garden of Adonis, is described as a "... joyous Paradize,... / So faire a place, as Nature can devize: / ... / But well I wore by triall, that this same / All other pleasaunt places doth excel" into which none may penetrate, save Venus and her entourage (Spenser 118). Just as one would look to Heaven to understand a pure vision of Christian morality, Spenser devises a pagan paradise to conceive of a perfected Hellenic society. The garden challenges Christian perceptions of afterlife with visions of reincarnation, though Spenser is careful to clarify that because the garden exists on Earth rather than in Heaven, time still "Does mow the flowering herbes and goodly things, / And all their glory to the ground downe flings, / Where they do wither and are fowly mard" (121-22). Because the garden is beholden to entropy, it cannot challenge Heaven. Yet it is not in Spenser's cosmology, which was his invention rather than an authentic Hellenic belief, that the politics of the garden can be understood, but in the relationship between Venus and Adonis.

To Spenser, not only is Venus and Adonis' relationship an example of quintessentially Hellenic love, but it is also one in which the woman is the dominant partner. Although Adonis is allowed to enjoy a homosexual tryst with Cupid, Venus hides her lover away from other women so that she alone can "reape sweet pleasure from the wanton boy" (Spenser 125-26). The roles of Malbecco and Helenore are reprised, but now the woman jealously keeps the man away from the world to extract pleasure from rather than the other way around. Malbecco keeps his wife in the "Christian" tower while Venus hoards her prize in the indelibly pagan Garden of Adonis;

a strict separation is enforced between the two as neither form of love could exist in the other's territory (Spenser 125, 169). Spenser erroneously associates Hellenic love with a reversal of gender roles, polyandry, and homosexuality, each of which was thought to be detrimental to the function and perpetuation of society. Paradoxically, Spenser's insistence on Christian chastity converts sex into a quality of the diametrically opposed Hellenism, making Hellenic practice essential to the continuance of life, but inimical to the purpose of society.

The passion of Venus and Adonis is depicted on the walls of the final Hellenic space, Castle Joyeous, home of Malecasta and her lecherous knights (Spenser 17). Castle Joyeous more closely resembles a Christian structure than the satyr's hedonistic glade or Adonis' pleasure gardens. While the glade has always been pagan and the garden represents an eternally pagan space, Castle Joyeous is an ostensibly Christian structure that has been corrupted by Malecasta's lust. Malecasta, the lady of delight, keeps six knights in her employ but these are not the idealized knights of Spenser's fiction (Spenser 16). Instead, the knights are treacherous, non-monogamous, and dishonorable in the extreme. In their first appearance, Malecasta's knights are immediately brought into conflict with Spenser's allegory for Christian virtue, the Redcrosse Knight (Spenser 13). The knights' every action is a perversion of chivalry; they fight to earn more lovers for their lady rather than to protect her chastity, trick men into accepting Malecasta as their lover even if they best the knights' challenge, and ambush travelers in a group (Spenser 14-5). None of these actions are pagan in the conventional sense, but they fit neatly into Spenser's warped conception of Hellenic morality.

More obviously pagan is Malecasta, who the narrator likens to "proud *Persian Queenes*" not because of her ethnicity but because she has the power to endow her court with feminine luxury (Spenser 19). Today, the word "pagan" is understood to mean any polytheistic religion, but in Spenser's time the word could be more broadly applied to any non-Christian faith, including Zoroastrianism, which dominated Iran during the fifth century when *The Faerie Queene* takes place. By likening Malecasta to a Persian queen, Spenser is calling her pagan, though the narrator alludes frequently to Hellenic, rather than Iranian, divinity when describing Castle Joyeous and its mistress. Beside Malecasta's décor, there is nothing to suggest that she worships any god, yet the narrator insists on describing the castle's music as a "*Lydian* harmony" while the food is the bounty of "*Ceres* and *Lyaeus*" (Spenser 19, 23). Just as the sun was characterized as Phoebus in the glade, in Castle Joyeous, the moon is personified as "faire *Cynthia*" (Spenser 20). Malecasta's presence in the poem has no purpose other than to define the virtue of the newly introduced heroine, Britomart. Once she has proven her lack of virtue, Malecasta vanishes from the story (Spenser 26-7). While it is a gross oversimplification, many Christians believed that Hellenism had served a similar purpose in Europe's history. The ancient Hellenics had vanished before the moral certitude of Christianity, and thereafter their beliefs were only resuscitated to play an unwilling part in degrading and reductive comparisons which supposedly proved Christianity's monopoly on morality.

Celtic Paganism (Brythonic)

Spenser's reading of Brythonic, typically Welsh and Cornish, paganism is guided by proto nationalism rather than religious fervor or artistic ideas bequeathed by the

Renaissance. Although Spenser portrays Brythonic paganism more positively than he does Hellenism, he makes less of an attempt to understand the religion on its own terms, and instead relies on anglicized mythology. His allusions to Brythonic belief are mainly asserted by invoking the names of heroes like King Arthur or Merlin rather than gods, because during the Renaissance, there was no cultural value assigned to any strain of paganism other than Hellenic. Because Arthur and Merlin were mortal, Spenser can make dynastic connections to legitimize certain figures while delegitimizing others. Celtic paganism could be more effectively wielded as a political tool rather than a social or religious one. Through the characters of Britomart and Arthur, Spenser attempts to legitimize Queen Elizabeth I's rule over Wales.

In the Act of Union of 1536, less than two decades before Spenser began work on *The Faerie Queene*, Elizabeth I's father King Henry VIII formally incorporated the Welsh territories into England (Owen and Cahill 221). Following the tumultuous succession in which Elizabeth was declared illegitimate before assuming the throne, the young queen's authority over the English heartlands was imperiled, to say nothing of Wales (Petrakos 400-01). In the late 16th century, Welsh was still the predominant language of Wales and the former kingdom retained a vibrant culture that dated to the pre-Roman Britons; the Welsh were easily distinguished from their English masters (Williams 1). Through his Welsh characters, Spenser conflated Welsh and English histories to create a single narrative throughline that, while incorrect, would both placate and anglicize the Welsh. Because the Anglo-Saxons had not yet settled in Britai n when Rome gave up the province, Spenser's task necessitated fabricating

genealogy, concocting a system of metempsychosis, and blurring the lines between fiction and reality.

The latter two tasks were accomplished by Spenser's Garden of Adonis. As previously stated, the garden has no classical pagan counterpart, but was instead created because the concept of reincarnation was a powerful political tool. Spenser specifies that after a soul passed into the garden, "Some thousand years so doen they there remayne, / And then of [Genius] are clad with other hew, / Or sent into the chaungefull world agayne, / Till thether they retourne, where first they grew: / So like a wheele arownd they ronne from old to new" (119). It is not a coincidence that Britomart's quest takes place exactly one thousand years before Elizabeth I's birth, nor that Britomart and Elizabeth were both renowned for their chastity. All but explicitly, Spenser urges the reader to accept the pagan idea of reincarnation (Spenser 36). In effect, any genealogical ties that Spenser makes with Britomart must also hold for Elizabeth since they are not only related but are literally the same person (Spenser 65-6).

The ideal ancestor for Spenser's heroine would be one who served as a missing link between the Welsh and English and contradicted the values that the poet ascribed to Hellenism. It is Merlin who suggests that Boudica, ancient queen of the Britons who led a revolt against Roman rule, was related to Britomart (Spenser 65; Gillespie 125). Boudica was a useful tool for Spenser despite her "powerful influence as a [pagan] diviner" because she may have been revolting against religious oppression imposed by the Hellenic Roman Empire (Gillespie 106). Boudica, and Brythonic paganism, are thus demarcated as "good" pagans because of their opposition to the debauched interlopers.

Boudica's ethnicity could also pose a problem for Spenser, as the warrior queen was a Briton, making her descendants Welsh rather than English. In fact, Boudica has become a nationalist icon for the Welsh, but because her insurrection was based in Iceni or East Anglia, she could be appropriated by the English (Gillespie 35, 138-39). Despite her defeat, Boudica was an effective female ruler, and even before *The Faerie Queene*, the Briton queen was lauded in Elizabeth I's court (Gillespie 133). Perhaps unintentionally, Boudica's centrality to Spenser's legitimization of Elizabeth also legitimized unauthorized ideas about the afterlife and native British paganism.

Spenser's allusions to Brythonic religion are subtler than his references to Hellenism and are designed to be understood only by a Welsh audience familiar with the stories he replicated. The *Mabinogion*, which Sioned Davies describes as "the collective name now given to eleven medieval Welsh tales...dated between 1382 and 1410," were in fact much older, though before the fourteenth century they existed only as oral tales (Davies   vi). Like other pre-literate societies, the stories of the pagan Welsh were later transcribed by Christians who refused to admit the existence of other gods. As a result, figures like Rhiannon and Gwyn ap Nudd, who have linguistic and magical connections to documented Celtic deities, are reduced to mortality (Davies 11, 199). It is likely that this change was made by the Welsh during the oral period, as they were among the first British societies to convert to Christianity. In *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser appropriates the Welsh characters Arthur and Merlin to establish a sense of familiarity. The former had long been associated with Britain's unity while the latter's wisdom was deployed to add credibility to the prophecy in which Boudica is referenced. Insidiously, by creating a

work in which Arthur and his retinue are English rather than Welsh, Spenser appropriates a hallmark of Welsh culture, and contributes to its anglicization.

Aside from the obvious borrowings, Spenser recreates some of the more well-known stories and locations of the *Mabinogion*. Arthur's pursuit of Florimell mirrors Pwyll's pursuit of Rhiannon; both men chase women on steeds for altruistic reasons, and in both cases, the woman cannot be caught. Arthur's failure is attributed to Florimell's "deadly feare of that foule swaine" and Pwyll for "some magical explanation," but the principle is the same (Spenser 84; Davies 9). Although the prophecy in which Merlin foretells Britain's fall to the Anglo-Saxons is not typically included in the *Mabinogion*, it is paralleled by the same character's predictions in *The Faerie Queene* (Geoffrey 117-18). Spenser's version of the prophecy is extended to include William the Conqueror's invasion, after which "the Briton blood their crowne agayn reclame (Spenser 62-3). In this version of events, the Tudors represent Welsh interests above all, when in reality, the house had been thoroughly anglicized by the time of Elizabeth I. Faerie Land, peculiar in that it is a space into which a person can freely pass despite its otherworldly properties, is like the Welsh faerie realm, Annwfn (Spenser 67; Davies 4). These examples are subtle and would be taken at face value by an English audience. To the Welsh, who had grown up listening to stories from what had been Brythonic religion and would become the *Mabinogion*, Spenser's retellings would impart a sense of continuity between the Welsh and English lords just as the *Mabinogion* had ensured continuity between paganism and Christianity. Both the transcribed *Mabinogion* and *The Faerie Queene* legitimized and perpetuated the cultural and religious order to which they belonged, along with the current ruler.

Celtic Paganism (Goidelic)

Spenser's allusions to Goidelic paganism are sparse and aspersive. His impression seems to have been that Goidelic culture was an unruly and degenerate branch of Brythonic that could only attain civilization by kowtowing to the English. Spenser's imperialistic tendencies were strengthened by his time as a deputy in colonial Ireland (Stephens xxvi). The lion's share of *The Faerie Queene* was written in Ireland, and thus contains Irish influences. Nevertheless, Dorothy Stephens claims that Spenser "advocat[ed] brutal suppression of [Ireland's] people" because he believed that "colonial expansion was necessary in order to maintain national identity, yet worri[ed] that the English were diluting their identity by mixing their culture and bloodlines with those of the Irish" (xxvi). Spenser's fear of cultural blending was somewhat justified, as proven by the Welsh example, though because England's ventures were colonial rather than diplomatic, it was clear that any cultural mixing would be done on England's terms. Still, Spenser's xenophobia permeates *The Faerie Queene,* but it is to the Irish that he displays the depths of his antipathy. Goidelic paganism could not be wielded as a religious or cultural tool, and so Spenser's allusions to it were purely to demarcate which groups must be liquidated through colonization.

The Faerie Queene's Irish allegories are not given names; they are to be considered an unknowable and treacherous other that must be destroyed if virtue is to survive. The most salient examples of this in book three are the foresters, whose battle with Timias evokes Irish guerilla tactics and the oft misunderstood cult of the head (Spenser 94, 96). *The Faerie Queene* is replete with violence, yet the text rarely dwells in descriptions of harm. Exceptions, like Timias' encounter with the foresters, where the

squire "strooke at [the forester] with force so violent, / That headlesse him into the foord he sent: / The carcas with the streame was carried downe, / But th'head felle backeward on the Continent," are worth examining for their peculiarity (Spenser 96). Spenser's prose is devoid of religious meaning. Rather, he depicts a scene in which a knight enacts just and earthly vengeance on barbarians for centuries of headhunting.

The cult of the head was prevalent across Celtic Europe, but by the Renaissance, the Celts had all but vanished from continental Europe and most of Britain (Ross 100). Accordingly, cultic head relics were regarded as an Irish, rather than Celtic, phenomenon. Just as Boudica was a shared heritage for the English and the Welsh, headhunting was a shared inheritance of the English and the Celts, but in Spenser's narrative, the practice is left to the Irish alone (Ross 106). The cult was established in early Irish literature, which "is full of descriptions of heroes returning from battle with the heads of the slain strung on withies and impaling them about their fortresses and homesteads" (Ross 99). These heads—human, stone, and metal—were "a symbol of divinity and the powers of the otherworld" and were considered to be "the seat of the soul" (Ross 161-62). The heads were not just evidence of martial prowess but were a "distinctive feature of [Celtic] religious expression" even after the Emerald Isle was Christianized (Ross 162).

Spenser does not attempt to understand Goidelic paganism as he did Hellenism, nor does he carefully repackage the creed's mythology as he did with the Brythonic *Mabinogion*. Instead, he wields a recognizable symbol of alleged Irish barbarism to justify territorial expansion. Barbarizing the enemy to justify his destruction was a common practice in the classical and medieval world, as Spenser understood. The tactic

was frequently employed by the Romans, most saliently against Boudica and the Britons, who were falsely accused of human sacrifice (Gillespie 111). Like his protagonist, Spenser envisions himself, and the English by extension, as descendants of Troy and brothers of Rome (Spenser 183). In Spenser's view, England is a perfected Rome that is free of Hellenic influence, possessed of a strong Brythonic heritage, and anxious to destroy the Celtic barbarians just beyond its borders.

Far from viewing paganism as a monolith, Spenser explored and exploited different cultures' native polytheistic beliefs to further his own political and moral aims. It follows that for a reader to understand *The Faerie Queene's* message, one must be able to differentiate between pagan creeds themselves. Spenser differentiating between pagan religions does not mean that he understands them, let alone respects them. He views each from a Christianized framework. Hellenism is a culturally significant but ultimately sinful creed that must be destroyed and replaced by Christianity for society to flourish. Brythonic paganism is a virtuous precursor to Christianity, while Goidelic paganism is destructive and barbarous because of its separation from its morally superior progenitor, like Satan. Spenser's ideas are reductive, but they enable modern readers to think more critically about conceptions of pre-Christian divinity beyond a monotheistic frame, and ultimately, consider Christianity as equal to, rather than superior to, each of the many pagan religions.

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Liberation, Bondage, and the Supernatural in *Kindred*

Meredith Perkins

As a neo-slave narrative, Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred* subverts the typical supernatural tropes of time travel fiction by binding the time traveler, Dana, to the Antebellum South. Rather than using time travel as a device to teach the protagonist a lesson (Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*) or a launchpad to explore post-apocalyptic, otherworldly futures (Wells' *The Time Machine*), Butler's use of time travel uniquely reflects how people are complexly bound to their own histories.

The duality of liberation and bondage is a key motif in *Kindred*, beginning with the mechanics of Dana's time travel itself. Time travel liberates Dana from existing within the rules of the traditional space-time continuum; however, her time travel is not voluntary. Dana's time travel ability binds her to her ancestor Rufus, ridding Dana of her own autonomy as she is forced to adapt her life around her unpredictable time travel episodes. Dana involuntarily appears to Rufus whenever his life is in danger, creating a dynamic in which Dana's existence depends on Rufus's survival and Rufus's survival depends on Dana's appearances. While both Rufus and Dana are bound to one another, the racial power dynamics within the novel place Rufus in a position of privilege and Dana in a position of compromised security when Dana is traveled back in time; Dana is

at the mercy of Rufus to have any freedoms — such as an opportunity to read without punishment — while living at the Weylin's plantation.

When Dana encounters her family history firsthand, the generational trauma of slavery becomes a fresh wound for her. Dana witnesses children pretending to have slave auctions, Alice having her freedom taken away for choosing to marry Isaac, and other horrific events buried in the history of Antebellum slavery (Butler 99, 119). While Dana is liberated in the sense that she can supernaturally travel to the future and escape the dangers in the South, the injuries she acquires in the past follow her: a reflection of how the pain of the past cannot be erased. At the start of the novel, readers meet Dana with a severed arm: an accident that occurs when she time-travels back to her present-day life and lands partially stuck in a wall (Butler 1). This characterizes time travel, a science fiction device often depicted as fun and adventurous, as highly consequential and burdensome. Additionally, Butler demonstrates that the more 'liberated' future Dana lives in is not a truly free place for Black women: colorism, misogyny, and biases against interracial relationships still bind Black women to a lesser status in American society. Thus, despite Dana having the freedom to leave the Weylin plantation with the knowledge of a free future, *Kindred* raises the question: how free are Black women truly amidst intersecting forms of stigmatization?

The immersive narrative structure of the time travel novel places us as readers as the time traveler: readers are, in many ways, time traveling with Dana as twenty-first-century companions looking into the social issues of the 1970s and the 19th century. The readers are liberated to close the book and travel back to present day; however, the harrowing reality is that the issues on the Weylin plantation — white supremacy, racism,

sexual violence, sexism — were not fictitious, but real history and these issues still persist. Through the supernatural element of time travel, Butler is able to link the traumas of past and present together as Dana oscillates between life as a Black woman struggling to survive in Antebellum slavery, and life as a Black woman navigating interracial marriage in 1970s America.

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A Holy Place Outside of Time: A Look Into William Faulkner's Wilderness

Rachel Waldrop

William Faulkner is regarded as one of the major figureheads of southern and environmental literature, known for his fictional Mississippian county of Yoknapatawpha and the portrayal of its woodlands. While his writing teaches us to appreciate the wilderness around us, there is arguably a subliminal message buried in the texts, one of the religious natures of wilderness. The Yoknapatawpha woods appear to be an escape from "the ugly artificiality of modern civilization," one of purity and untouched by man, but a devastating idea presented and criticized by William Cronon could be at work: that the wilderness as we know it is not constrained by time (Cronon 78-79). Faulkner's "The Old People," "The Bear," and "Delta Autumn" all exemplify the belief that the wilderness is a place outside of time because it is a holy entity, complete with religious elements that convey the degradation of the natural world and demise of familial heritages.

The belief that the wilderness is an entity that exists outside of time and history can be difficult to understand without further context. In his essay, "The Trouble with Wilderness," William Cronon discusses how society's perception of nature is incorrect; while people view nature as parts of the earth that is "'virgin,' uninhabited land," this

belief distorts and, in some cases, erases its history (Cronon 79). Native American tribes who once lived in these preserved plots have been kicked out of their own homes to feed into this distorted myth pushed by the elite classes and it exposes the truth about the constructed and unnatural idea of uninhabited land (Cronon 79). Cronon writes, "In virtually all its manifestations, wilderness represents a flight from history...it is a place outside of time, from which human beings had to be ejected before the fallen world of history could properly begin" (Cronon 79). It is an erasure of its history that characterizes this idea of wilderness, allowing people to refer to it with a more religious-esque language, thus constructing it into an entity of secular holiness (Cronon 80). Faulkner's short stories have this kind of language woven into their texts.

Though it is not the first story chronologically, "Delta Autumn" is the best starting point to analyze the idea of the wilderness being a holy place. In this story, Ike McCaslin from "The Bear" is now an old man in his eighties, heading to what remains of the Yoknapatawpha woods with the descendants of McCaslin Edmonds and other younger men for a camping trip. The woods are now diminished to a small plot after years of degradation by a lumber company from Memphis which could feasibly be a representation of the greedy nature of civilization. Faulkner uses pastoral language in this story to convey the dwindling respect and spirituality of the wilderness, told through the pathetic fallacy of Ike. According to Greg Garrard in his essay, "Pastoral," Greg Garrard defines a pathetic fallacy as a phenomenon when "[p]astoral often suggests that nature responds to human emotions," which is an incorrect placing of feelings on natural elements like mountains and forests (Garrard 40). He also emphasizes a claim by Raymond Williams that the pastoral is "characterized by

nostalgia," where one is drawn further into the past every time he looks back (Garrard 41). Because of his initiation into the wilderness religion from his youth, Ike is experiencing nostalgia for how the woods used to be. Ike thinks, "At first there had been only the old towns along the River, [t]he paths made by deer and bear became roads and then highways...[n]ow a man drove two hundred miles from Jefferson before he found wilderness to hunt in" (Faulkner 324). This nostalgia of the pastoral, or *elegy* as Williams and Garrard call it, can be tied to the biblical story of the fall of man (Garrard 42). Similar to Adam and Eve being kicked out of the Garden of Eden and told they can never return to its grandeur; Ike feels like he has been removed from the beauty of what the woods once were and must reside in the remains.

Though the wilderness' imminent doom is shown primarily in "The Bear," the tail-end of this demise appears in "Delta Autumn." The descendant of McCaslin Edmonds, Roth, is an interesting character Faulkner has readers pay attention to. Throughout the beginning of the short story, Ike attempts to teach the young men the holiness of the wilderness, reflecting on what Sam Fathers had taught him, but he and Roth bicker. They begin their argument over the natural behavior of men, as Ike claims that "[t]here are good men everywhere...most men are better than their circumstances given the chance to be" (Faulkner 329). Roth, however, reveals his idea of men's natural behavior in a rather sinister way. He claims that "only because folks happen to be watching him that a man behaves at all" (Faulkner 329). At first, this belief seems to be merely a belief, but Roth's actions later in the story convey that this idea is ingrained in him. The young man believes does and fawns—or women and children—are something "this world ain't ever lacked" and that they are free for men to reign over and kill just

like bucks, as per his secret relationship with a light-skinned Black woman (Faulkner 331). Due to his selfishness and rapacity, he seems to have inherited from his ancestors, Otis Wheeler claims in his essay, "Faulkner's Wilderness," Roth leaves a bundle of money for her, as she is to appear at their campsite in the woods, to ward her off (Wheeler 133). Ike ends up being the handler of the money, and it is during the exchange with the Negro woman that the old man realizes what Roth has done: he has killed a doe (Wheeler 133-134). Roth is a confused and bitter individual who cannot comprehend Ike's teachings about the woods, thus portraying the horrid reality that Ike McCaslin is the last of a dying wilderness religion, "doomed and avenged by an immanent principle in its source, the wilderness" (Wheeler 134).

Now that certain aspects of the Yoknapatawpha wilderness have been established, it is best to look back at "The Old People." This story, which takes place alongside "The Bear," focuses on Ike's first major hunt with his older cousin, Sam Fathers, where Ike is initiated into the wilderness when Sam Fathers coats the boy's face in the blood of the deer he kills (Faulkner 171). Near the beginning of the story, readers get a glimpse of the heritage of Sam Fathers, who is the "noble savage" or "Ecological Indian," as Shepard Krech first coins and later Robbie Ethridge puts it in his essay, "The Wild and the Tame: Sam Fathers as Ecological Indian," of the fictional Yoknapatawpha universe. Noble savages are defined by anthropologists as non-white individuals who are "peaceful, carefree, unshackled, eloquent, and wise—an innocent living at one with the world of nature" and like the wilderness in which they inhabit, serve as spiritual guides for moral truth (Ethridge 136, 138). Sam is the son of a Chickasaw chief and is one of the few people of Chickasaw descent left in Yoknapatawpha County (Faulkner

159, 163-165). His heritage and personality are what make him "one of the most memorable and significant uses of the Ecological Indian trope in American literature," as he is strongly connected to the wilderness through his Native American blood and plays the role of Ike's spiritual mentor (Ethridge 136-137). If nature is perceived as a cathedral, then Sam is a "savage priest, the only one pure enough…to initiate Ike into the wild" (Cronon 80, Ethridge 139).

The climax of "The Old People" reveals more of the religious elements of Faulkner's wilderness. Boon Hogganbeck, one of the other hunters in the group, sees a massive buck and gathers everyone to chase after it, causing Sam to take Ike to a particular spot where the buck might approach (Faulkner 174). It is here that Ike comes face-to-face not with the beast but with its ghost, which seemed "as if it were walking out of the very sound of the horn which related its death," which develops religious connections (Faulkner 177). In their book, *Faulkner and the Ecology of the South*, Joseph Urgo and Ann Abadie compare this scene with that of the biblical story of Moses and the burning bush from the book of Exodus (Abadie and Urgo 99). "The wilderness opens itself to Ike in brief moments," they write, "in which the divinity is present and all-seeing…he suddenly becomes aware of some presence" (Abadie and Urgo 100). However, the buck's presence is described differently than with the typical Christian verbiage; when everyone disperses to a place to wait for the beast, Faulkner chooses to describe it with the language of a more indifferent God. Faulkner writes, "[N]ot frightened yet and never fearsome but just alert, perhaps quite near, perhaps conscious also of the eye of the ancient immortal Umpire" (174-175). This indifference is treated like a pathetic fallacy; Abadie and Urgo argue that Ike isn't being watched by the woods

any more than the other hunters, so this scene aligns more with the God of Byzantine churches, a God whose "tremendous all-seeing eyes the awe-struck believer can never escape" (Abadie and Urgo 100). Ike's reactions towards the natural world around him are not unlike that of ancient Hebrew reactions towards the Old Testament God; he has a sense of awe in the face of a presence that is "all-knowing and indifferent" (Abadie and Urgo 100).

While he teaches Ike how to hunt in the woods, Sam also tells him stories of his Native American ancestors, whom he calls the Old People. Ike visualizes the stories "not only as if they had happened yesterday but as if they were still happening" (Faulkner 165). Faulkner also writes that there is the possibility that some of the stories have not happened yet and would occur soon if Ike himself and his family line had not yet come into existence (165). These timeless tales represent an "everpresentness of the past, a manner of eternity" (Abadie and Urgo 100). Even the ghost of the buck Ike sees is shown to acknowledge Sam as a figure with a strong connection to the seemingly immortal past, calling the Chickasaw descendant "Chief, Grandfather" (Abadie and Urgo 100). Eternity is a concept associated with religion in terms of an afterlife or endless future, and it is a timeless one the wilderness tries to invite Ike into. However, because the boy is only a guest in the woods due to his McCaslin blood, he can only accept this eternity in death (Abadie and Urgo 101). He believes the invitation into timelessness is an illusion, an impossibility "he thinks he can overcome by repudiating a heritage synonymous with wrong and shame" (Abadie and Urgo 101).

"The Bear" is the largest and most complex story of the three, and, as such, exemplifies the holiness of the wilderness the most. As soon as the story begins, readers

encounter a description with a rather religious connotation of future characters and their importance. "Two beasts," Faulkner begins, "counting Old Ben, the bear, and two men, counting Boon Hogganbeck, in whom some of the same blood ran which ran in Sam Fathers…only Sam and Old Ben and the mongrel Lion were taintless and incorruptible" (Faulkner 183). This ties back to the notion that Sam Fathers is a spiritual guide, but Old Ben and Lion, the dog chosen to slay him, appear to play similar roles in this natural world; the wilderness is a place of a spiritual and moral quest for hunters, and Old Ben and Lion are two of its more natural teachers (Wheeler 128-129). Lion teaches Ike the meaning of being a hunter, that one must be brave and strong in the face of fear (Wheeler 128-129). He is one of the only dogs out of the bunch to match the ferocity of Old Ben, showing an overcoming of the apprehension Ike has felt since encountering the old bear (Wheeler 128). Sam Fathers puts into words what Lion and the rest of the natural world are showing: "Be scared. You can't help that. But don't be afraid" (Wheeler 128, Faulkner 198).

Just like Sam Fathers, Old Ben also serves as a spiritual guide to Ike. The bear is presented as an ancient presence in the Big Bottom, and one that seems to already know Ike; however, the boy cannot approach Old Ben until he abandons his gun and gear, objects of the antithesis of the wilderness, civilization (Faulkner 193, 197-198). According to Ursula Brumm in her essay, "Wilderness and Civilization: A Note on William Faulkner," wilderness is an "untouched, timeless nature" that is doomed by civilization (Brumm 130). Old Ben seems to know and understand this in "The Bear," which is why he does not initially reveal himself to Ike as a creature of the woods but behaves almost like an omniscient deity (Abadie and Urgo 100). Civilization harbors

self-serving rapacity, a form of wickedness that contrasts with the holy interconnectedness of nature; therefore, one cannot have close communion with the wilderness until they "relinquish all the gadgets with which civilization has provided [them]" (Brumm 130, 134). This act is not one of paganism but rather a representation of *imitatio Christi*, or an imitation of how Christ may have behaved and lived while on the earth (Brumm 134). Old Ben is utilized to shape Ike into "the archetype of man suffering…who expiate[s] the guilt of civilization by renunciation of the power and the privilege" (Brumm 134).

The holiness and doom of the wilderness are not present solely in the natural environment, as there is a religious morality surrounding the heritages and upbringings of Ike McCaslin and Sam Fathers. As mentioned, civilization harbors rapacity and is the opposing force of the wilderness, a force that has ingrained itself in the McCaslin-Edmonds family lineage (Brumm 130, Wheeler 130). Since this intense greed is what ultimately destroys the Yoknapatawpha woods, Wheeler argues that, in order to comprehend the moral characteristics of the wilderness' demise, one must turn to the heritages of the two most important characters involved (Wheeler 130). Both Ike and Sam are "priests of a wilderness religion," as they have learned what it has tried to teach them, but their freedom from rapacity comes in different forms (Wheeler 130). On one hand, Sam has become a wilderness priest through his blood; as the son of a Chickasaw chief and Black woman, his heritage is deemed untainted by any form of greed towards the natural world because of its noble savagery (Wheeler, 130). However, Ike is different. He comes from a line of men who have reputations as the most rapacious individuals of Yoknapatawpha County, thus his initiation into the "wilderness religion"

must be more ceremonial (Wheeler 130). He discovers the truth about his family lineage, where his grandfather "tamed and ordered it for the reason that the human beings he held in bondage" and whose sons developed traces of incest in his blood (Faulkner 244, Abadie and Urgo 101). Because the land is something God created to be shared among everyone, he renounces his relation to the McCaslin-Edmonds family and gives the inherited land to his cousin, who in turn passes it down to his descendants in "Delta Autumn" (Brumm 131, Faulkner 244-245). The other hunters in the group are "uninitiated," unlike Ike and Sam, and can never be initiated due to the standards Faulkner establishes (Wheeler 131). Cronon even discusses this idea in a more secular way, writing, "...to believe that nature, to be true, must also be wild, then our very presence in nature represents its fall" (Cronon 80-81). The constructed belief of wilderness is that it should be a place free of any human presence, save for any "sojourners enjoying their reverie in God's natural cathedral" (Cronon 81).

However, rapacity in the uninitiated is not the only thing that causes Old Ben and Sam Fathers' deaths and later the wilderness' demise. Though greed shows its face in "Delta Autumn" through the descendant of McCaslin Edmonds, Faulkner portrays the doom of the wilderness at the hands of someone different. He writes in "The Bear" that Sam, Old Ben, and Lion "were taintless and incorruptible;" these characteristics foreshadow the sudden change in these spiritual guides to myths of the American wilderness (Faulkner 183, Brumm 130). Nevertheless, it is imperative to remember who is the one to commence the hunt for Old Ben and train Lion to be a bear killer, like Sam Fathers (Wheeler 131). At first glance, it appears to be an example of a believer turning against his life-long religion, aided by his apprentice, but Wheeler argues there may be

more to this turn of events. Since it has been established Ike and Sam are the only initiated ones among the group of hunters, the act of killing Old Ben is that of a "sacrilegious" motive; Sam states that Old Ben will die one day anyway, and he should die at the hands of either himself or Ike instead of one of the others, who are still tainted by civilization's greed (Wheeler 131). This sacrilegious motive is further proven in the final moments of Sam Fathers. After Boon Hogganbeck slays the bear, Sam simultaneously suffers a stroke and later passes away from exhaustion (Faulkner 232, 237). Sam is as much a part of the wilderness as Old Ben, the two behaving as spiritual guides to Ike, and to kill one is to prompt the beginnings of a prophecy of doom upon the wilderness (Wheeler 131). Thus, the characters of "The Bear '' have inadvertently brought about the wilderness' demise by devoting themselves to a constructed idea of their natural world.

It is therefore arguable that Faulkner's texts could portray a wilderness that, due to its heavy religious and history of nature and heritage degradations, is deemed a holy place outside of time. Faulkner utilizes language in "Delta Autumn" to convey a type of pastoralism filled with nostalgia, recreating in Ike McCaslin what Adam and Eve possibly felt when they were cast out of Eden (Garrard 42). Ike sees that the wilderness is dying off because of the vicious cycle of rapacity in civilized men, and he will be the last one initiated into this "wilderness religion" (Wheeler 134). In the past of "The Old People," Sam Fathers' role as the spiritual guide, or "noble savage," provides evidence that the wilderness is its own religious entity by showing Ike the supernatural and initiating him into its natural cathedral (Cronon 80, Ethridge 136-139). The boy's encounter with the ghost of the buck, though treated as an example of pathetic fallacy, is

religiously symbolic in that his reaction to the spirituality of the wilderness mimics that of the reaction of ancient Hebrews towards an indifferent Old Testament God (Abadie and Urgo 100). The ghost of the buck seems to be an invitation for Ike to relish in the eternity the wilderness has to offer, but Ike can only accept when he passes away; his McCaslin blood is too impure to accept this invitation any other way (Abadie and Urgo 101).

Finally, in "The Bear," readers see that Sam is not the only spiritual guide to Ike, as Old Ben and Lion are two of the woods' more natural teachers (Wheeler 128-129). Lion simply shows a sense of bravery that must be instilled in everyone in the wilderness religion, and Old Ben shows that one must abandon any connection he has to civilization in order to be one with nature (Brumm 130, 134). Though the two initiated ones in the group of hunters, Sam and Ike's heritages make their freedom from rapacity obtainable in two different ways, one of natural blood and one of redemption from his family's history (Wheeler 130). The imminent doom that has been threatening the woods throughout the stories, readers learn, is not caused only by the rapacity of the civilized hunters but also by the most devout believers of its religion, Sam Fathers and Ike McCaslin. It is a sacrilegious act for Sam and Ike to train Lion to kill Old Ben, as Sam deems it is better for the bear, and ultimately the wilderness itself, to die at the hands of those initiated into the wilderness religion instead of those who are not (Wheeler 131). William Faulkner's portrayal of his Yoknapatawpha woods is without a doubt what has earned him the accolade of being a figurehead for southern and environmental literature, but it appears to be the religious connections peppered into his writing that make his fictional nature so powerful and impressionistic on readers.

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Girlhood and Growing Up of Alice, Coraline, and Chihiro

Teresa Xu

Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* creates an exploratory story structure that becomes replicated yet modified in Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* and Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* (2001): a dissatisfied girl navigates a fantastical universe before returning to her usual world with a new perspective. Although *Coraline* and *Spirited Away* give their protagonists much more agency in the fantastical world, undertaking quests directly, these works all explore the questioning and assertion of identity in the girls' "normal" lives by making their protagonists navigate and learn from a fantastical world. The works all value instilling confidence, an understanding of one's identity, and an appreciation of family in the development of a girl.

The structure in *Alice* transitions from normalcy to the extraordinary and ends with a new normal. Alice is initially "tired" of sitting with her sister with "nothing to do," so the protagonist is discontent with the normal world (Carroll 63). She then notices a White Rabbit taking a "watch out of its waistcoat-pocket" (Carroll 63), an unusual sight, and follows it down a rabbit hole, entering the fantastical Wonderland sans parental supervision. Wonderland is full of talking animals, nonsensical rules, and a bewildering government, defamiliarizing the adult world. For instance, the Duchess is recognizably a

mother tending to a baby, yet the sneezing baby turns into a "handsome pig" (Carroll 108). Time operates differently in Wonderland, telling "the day of the month" rather than "what o'clock it is" (Carroll 114). Wonderland is ruled by the Queen of Hearts, who is feared for threatening executions about "once in a minute" (Carroll 125), yet "they never executes nobody" (Carroll 133). Alice not only navigates Wonderland but also shapes it, such as by creating a "pool of tears" (Carroll 74), and she changes within it: changing in size and her own conception of identity. She shrinks or grows when she consumes food and drink, such as a large mushroom, and this physical change prompts her to question who she is: "...if I'm not the same... 'Who in the world am I?'" (Carroll 72). While she initially recalls facts from school with ease, she encounters animals who make her question her assumptions. The Pigeon's idea that little girls—and, by extension, Alice—are "a kind of serpent" because they eat eggs is "such a new idea to Alice, that she was quite silent" (Carroll 100). She "had never been so much contradicted in her life before" (Carroll 98), indicating that this new world truly challenges her and urges her to grow up. Although she is curious and not fully attuned to social cues— offending the mouse by bringing up her cat-eating mice (Carroll 76)—she displays a willingness to listen to these new perspectives. Despite her identity crisis and confusion from her encounters, Alice resolves to return to her original size and find her way back home—she develops a newfound appreciation of home, where "it was much pleasanter" (Carroll 86). Similarly, instead of crying like she did when she first entered Wonderland, she ends up rebelling against the Queen of Hearts' tyranny and standing up for herself— her own identity—by dismissing her as "nothing but a pack of cards" (Carroll 158). This

rebellion wakes her up and successfully brings her back home. She appreciates her normal identity above all.

Coraline also presents a young, bored girl navigating a strange world, but her assertion of identity is stronger, and she saves herself and other characters in the Other World, displaying more courage, cleverness, and heroism. Like Alice, Coraline is bored with her usual life and "want[s] to explore" (Gaiman 7), and she does end up discovering the Other World before returning to her normal life without her parents' knowledge. She even befriends a cat who guides her, just as the Cheshire Cat becomes a companion to Alice. However, Coraline's discovery happens not only because of her own curiosity and desire for adventure, a trait she shares with Alice, but also because her parents do not take her complaints of boredom seriously: her mother ignores her desire to buy "green gloves" (Gaiman 25), and her dad asks her to "leave [him] alone to work" (Gaiman 9). Gaiman shows that Coraline has issues with a relatively neglectful family, creating a darker familial setting that is not present in Alice's story. As such, Coraline is even less satisfied with her normal life, which makes her later appreciation of her usual life and family more meaningful and symbolic of growth: the view from her window "had never seemed so world," and she thinks "nothing...had ever been so interesting" as sunlight illuminating the cat's fur (Gaiman 154). She finds solitude and stillness fascinating like never before. However, the contents of the Other World and Coraline's journey within it differ markedly from Alice's Wonderland. Rather than defamiliarizing the adult world, the Other World defamiliarizes Coraline's life. It creates an uncanny effect by mirroring her bedroom but making it artificially colored, with "peculiar shades of pink and green" (Gaiman 33), and by mimicking her parents and neighbors. Unlike the Queen of Hearts,

who tries to punish everyone in Wonderland, the Other Mother in *Coraline* tries to replace Coraline's own family. Thus, Coraline's quest to save her parents and defeat the Other Mother is more specific and personal than Alice's meandering adventures, with higher stakes for her survival and well-being. The Other World is also uniquely permeable: while Wonderland does not quite follow Alice home, only pervading her sister's dream (Carroll 158), the Other Mother's hand still follows Coraline, trying to get the key to re-open her world (Gaiman 166). Coraline must handle this issue in her normal world, trapping the hand in the well, while Alice has no other problems to solve after she wakes up. While food is significant in *Alice* as substances that change Alice's size, it is used in *Coraline* as a means of manipulation, to trap Coraline into staying in the Other World (Gaiman 32). Unlike in *Alice,* the food does not change Coraline physically or tie her emotionally to the Other World. It is conditional: she must choose to bind herself to the Other Mother to keep eating that food. Unlike Alice, Coraline is given a choice. This element of choice, along with the mirroring of the Other World, renders Coraline's assertion of identity more important and powerful. Initially, like Alice, she wonders if another Coraline exists, but soon decides "No. There's just me" (Gaiman 77). She is the only one who can reconcile her two worlds and save herself from the Other World—she is the only bridge, and to return to normalcy, she must understand herself. While Alice mainly questions her identity and does not come to a clear resolution, Coraline must actively choose and affirm her identity. The button-eyes of the Other World characters, another distinctive feature of *Coraline's* world, contrast with real human eyes because of their flatness and dullness, so Coraline's refusal to trade her own eyes for the buttons (Gaiman 51) represents her refusal to give up her own

soul and identity. Her valiant efforts to save her parents and the other children's souls, defeat the Other Mother at her own game, and shield herself from future harm are journeys through which Coraline forges and affirms her identity—developing a sense of craftiness, courage, nobility, and gratitude for her family and life. Therefore, the issue of identity is far more central to *Coraline* than *Alice,* and the protagonist displays more character growth and heroism. She takes courage to ensure her family's safety, undertaking a quest of self-determination and becoming the hero of her own story, whereas Alice is more of a curious explorer in Wonderland.

 Spirited Away follows a young girl, Chihiro, as she gets drawn into a fantastical world and engages with it before returning to normalcy, all without parental knowledge. Like Alice and Coraline, Chihiro is dissatisfied with her normal life, but her unhappiness stems from worry over moving to a new home and leaving her friends—one of whom gifted her a bouquet—rather than boredom. Also, while Alice and Coraline seek adventure and excitement and enter the fantastical worlds of their own will, Chihiro is worried about going to the abandoned theme park and insists on leaving, while her parents are the ones who decide to stay. Moreover, the food has metaphysical properties, like in *Alice,* and the landscape of the bathhouse has unique spirits that are more similar to Wonderland than Coraline's Other World. However, rather than only changing the protagonist's size, the food in *Spirited Away* either causes a change in species—as it turns Chihiro's parents into pigs—or ensures Chihiro's very existence, as the food Haku gives her stops her from fading away. Hunger and greed also constitute much of the film's fantastical world, like it does in *Alice*. Wonderland's animal characters and Alice herself sing and recite poetry about food: "The little

crocodile...welcomes little fishes in" (Carroll 73). In *Spirited Away*, Chihiro's parents endanger their daughter through their greed and gluttony for the bathhouse's food—parallel to but different from the neglect of Coraline's parents—and the characters in the bathhouse prove to be greedy for money, as they throw themselves at No-Face when he gives everyone gold. In contrast, Chihiro never seeks anything for herself and remains committed to her goal of saving her parents and Haku, representing a morality purer than the amorality in Wonderland and Alice's own character. In fact, this morality enables her to change No-Face for the better, instead of solely depending on companions: their relationship is one of mutual aid and learning. She even becomes an employee of the bathhouse and learns to do chores, a specific 'adult' skill that helps her gain acceptance in the bathhouse. Yet this work comes at a price that corresponds to Coraline's journey with identity: Chihiro must adopt a new name and identity as Sen to stay in the bathhouse. She must change to fully fit in, even as she tries to hold onto her true self so she can escape. The only escape from the bathhouse comes from remembering her true name, and while she almost forgets herself—whereas Alice and Coraline never forget their name—she ends up becoming more confident in herself, like Coraline. The film is thus interested in identity, but also in its relationship to memory, an interest that *Alice* shares. Alice gradually loses her memory of poetry and other facts from school, but Chihiro ends up remembering how she first met Haku in the Kohaku River.

Overall, these three works examine a girl's coming of age and exploration and/or assertion of identity. Girlhood is most traditional and passive in *Alice,* as she tries to be polite to the new characters she meets—she apologizes to the Mouse and speaks "in a

soothing tone" (Carroll 76). Meanwhile, Coraline and Chihiro are portrayed as more agentic, courageous, and heroic, actively saving their parents and always choosing the 'right' path towards normalcy, which may be part of an effort to empower girls. All three works also include adult mother figures as antagonists that the girls confront: the Duchess, the Other Mother, and Yubaba. The Duchess is somewhat cruel to the pig—"I beat him when he sneezes" (Carroll 106)—the Other Mother gains power by enacting but not fulfilling the role of a mother, and Yubaba is attentive and affectionate toward Boh, unlike the other mother figures. Since all three girls challenge these problematic yet powerful mother figures, and they all end up wanting to return to their families with a new perspective, the works imply that the transition from girlhood to adulthood involves facing antagonistic mothers, understanding true love and motherhood, and appreciating mothers and family in general. A girl's coming of age still includes an important role in caring for a family and even a whole community.

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The Representation of Otherness in Discourse: An Analysis of Enigmatic Narrative in *Dracula*

Chenkai Yang

Bram Stoker's gothic novel *Dracula,* rewrites Transylvanian folklore and history, creating the antagonist, Dracula, as a threatening vampire who contains exotic cultural characteristics. The novel adopts an epistolary form which makes the characterization of Dracula heavily rely on different narrators' writing records, mostly diaries. The narrative pace in the novel is mostly slow and enigmatic because of the injection of several mysterious events, especially the long narrative tracking on Lucy's disease and Renfield's mental disorder. However, the pace is surprisingly fast in Dracula's death scene which reveals that Dracula is eventually powerless and vulnerable. Thus, the deferral of narrative in the novel makes the whole story enigmatic, allowing Stoker to show Dracula as the unknown and threatening in other narrators' narratives. However, images, shown in fragmentary narratives, guide the audience to believe in Dracula's crime. The incomplete written records such as diaries and historical studies are the tool for the narrators to produce knowledge about Dracula, and more importantly to confirm and justify their attempt to kill him as the elimination of the other. Finally, the fast narrative pace in the death scene, contrasting with the previously slow pace, questions the

credibility of the narratives about Dracula, who is perceived as a dangerous and invasive creature to their nation.

First of all, the deferral of the narrative makes the story enigmatic and ambiguous. Stoker inserts the event of a mysterious ship in Mina's journal which moves the focus away from Jonathan's encounter with the Count. In the narration of this event, Stoker depicts the scene of witnessing the ship in detail, "…the wind had by this time backed to the east, and there was a shudder amongst the watchers on the cliff as they realized the terrible danger in which she now was…It would be quite impossible that she should fetch the entrance of the harbour" (Stoker 112). Stoker's description of the situation on the sea shows the inescapable danger that the ship encounters. Interestingly, the ship is facing the same circumstance as Jonathan, who struggles with escaping from Dracula's castle. After that, Stoker's narrative suddenly turns ambiguous by using the image of fog:

> …then came another rush of sea-fog, greater than any hitherto--a mass of dank mist, which seemed to close on all things like a grey pall, and left available to men only the organ of hearing, for the roar of the tempest, and the crash of the thunder, and the blooming of the mighty billows came through the damp oblivion even louder than before… (Stoker 112).

The image of fog blurs the watchers' vision and prevents them from seeing the ship directly. The use of similar phrases like "the roar of," "the crash of," and "the blooming," suggests the watchers' lack of vision and that they can only perceive their surroundings by hearing. More importantly, the image of fog interrupts Stoker's narration and slows down the narrative speed, creating suspense and making the audience even more curious about the mystery. Similarly, Stoker adopts such deferred narration when he tells

Jonathan's experience in the Count's castle to make the story inexplicable while showing Dracula as a complex enigma. Thus, the slow narrative speed drives the audience to decode the enigma by following the narrators' confused narratives.

Then, the mysterious events in the novel, like the searchlight in the fog, offer implicit hints to look at the foggy narrative. The event of the escaped wolf, for example, implies Dracula's sin by showing the possible connection between him and the wolf:

> There was Bersicker a-tearin' like a mad thing at the bars as if he wanted to get out...close at hand was only one man...had a 'ard, cold look and red eyes...he pointed out the animiles to me and says: 'Keeper, these wolves seem upset at something.' (Stoker 174)

Stoker shows Dracula's unfamiliarity to British people by describing Dracula's special appearance, especially his "red eyes" in the narrative. Simultaneously, the keeper's narrative suggests Dracula's empathy with the wolf because Dracula seems to be able to understand the wolf's actions. The connection here makes it more convincing that the wolf's abnormal behavior, acting "...like a mad thing at the bars as if he wanted to get out...," (Stoker 174) looks relevant to the occurrence of this strange man, Dracula. According to Emily Gerard's article, the vampire is similar to a wolf in Transylvanian superstition, "...first cousin to the vampire, the long exploded were-wolf of the Germans is here to be found...Sometimes it is a dog instead of a wolf, whose form a man has taken either voluntarily or as penance for his sins" (Gerard 443). The relation between the vampire and wolves can also be found in the novel as there are many descriptions about wolves' howl near Dracula's castle. Therefore, the relationship between them assigns the image of the wolf as the implication of Dracula's crime.

Despite the escaped wolf, there are many other images in the novel that help track on Dracula in the ambiguous and long narrative. Mina depicts Dracula as "something dark stood behind the seat where the white figure shone, and bent over it" (Stoker 125) when she sees Lucy's somnambulism for the first time. Mina fails to make a clear description of Dracula's appearance since she can only see "...something dark behind the seat." Like the keeper of the escaped wolf, Dracula is unfamiliar to Mina, which makes the narrative in Mina's diary ambiguous. However, although Mina is unable to identify Dracula, she notices the tiny scar, "...two little red points..." (Stoker 127), on the skin of Lucy's throat which foreshadows Lucy's disease in the following plot. Remarkably, the scar on Lucy's throat keeps changing as the story continues. In this case, the image of the scar witnesses Lucy's transformation into a vampire because the physical characteristics of a vampire, such as sharper and longer teeth, become more remarkable on Lucy's face when the scar disappears (Stoker 196). In Transylvanian superstitions, "...every person killed by a *nosferatu* (vampire) becomes likewise a vampire after death and will continue to suck the blood of other innocent people till the spirit has been exorcised" (Geraed 442). The disappearance of the scar signifies the end of Lucy's transformation and forewarns Lucy's death later. The scar on Lucy's throat thus reveals her assimilation by Dracula, even if the narrative does not directly say so. Interestingly, even though the narrative is always enigmatic in the novel, the frequent use of imagery indirectly points to Dracula. Thus, the images of different events lead the audience to make the conclusion that Dracula is the criminal of all events based on the narrators' diaries.

The repetitive occurrence of images interconnects different narrators' diaries, making it necessary to combine the fragmentary information in different diaries. For instance, the image of the flapping at the window occurs in both Mina's and Lucy's diaries. The great bat's flapping sound suggests Dracula's haunting and control over Lucy since "Lucy sitting up in bed, still asleep, pointing to the window" (Stoker 128). Referring to the chapter "Of Mesmerism and Spiritualism" in William B. Carpenter's work:

> The Hypnotized subject...is entirely destitute of the power of self-direction over either his ideas, his feelings, or his actions; and seems entirely amenable to the will of another, who may govern the course of his subject's thoughts at his own pleasure, and may thus oblige him to perform any actions which he may choose to determine (Carpenter 464).

Lucy is the hypnotized subject who loses autonomy while sleeping as she points to the window without any consciousness, and the image of a huge bat flapping implies that Dracula is the one who governs the subject's thoughts at his own will. After that, the image of wolf appears again in Lucy's last journal, "the window blind blew back with the wind that rushed in, and in the aperture of the broken panes there was a head of a great, gaunt grey wolf" (Stoker 179). Because of the previous narratives, the image of a wolf now can directly refer to Dracula himself. Therefore, the recurrence of the wolf imagery further confirms that Lucy's death is the result of the Count's assimilation, the broken window signifying the Count's final prey which causes Lucy's death. Overall, the interconnection among different diaries allows the audience to make an interpretation of the Count's sin from the ambiguity of the narratives.

Similarly, Jamil Khader's article highlights the necessity of reading all of the diaries. In Khader's words, the ambiguous narrative suggests the victims' inability to speak of their traumatic experience: "As they mediate their traumatic experiences privately in their letters, diaries, and journals, the vampire's victims, especially Jonathan Harker, Mina, and Lucy, can only gain a belated and an incomplete understanding of its traumatic kernel, its horror" (Khader 78). The narrators who have a direct encounter with Dracula fail to record their experience completely due to their unsteady mood and unconsciousness. Therefore, each individual letter or diary is not adequate to know the truth. However, as Khader says, "...such horrific attacks are still speakable and representable through the collaborative efforts between survivors and secondary witnesses, even though such an effort can only produce a fragmentary and incomplete narrative" (Khader 78). In the latter parts of the novel, Dr. Van Helsing, one of "secondary witnesses" according to Khader, becomes the leader of the other narrators, who organized all diaries and made the conclusion of the Count's crime. Nevertheless, Khader's article reveals the fact that there is no credible narrator in the story. On one hand, Jonathan, Mina, and Lucy cannot retell their encounter with Dracula in complete detail since their experiences are too unbelievable and shocking even for themselves. On the other hand, Dr. Van Helsing has no direct contact with Dracula and concludes his personal interpretation of the writing materials creating a shortened and unfinished story.

The incomplete diaries and other written records allow the narrators to produce knowledge about Dracula. Despite the narrators' diaries, Dr. Van Heling also refers to several historical studies about the vampire that records their extraordinary strength. Dr. Van Helsing describes Dracula using phrases like "panther-like in the movement" and "a

cold stare of lion-like disdain" (Stoker 346). The comparison of Dracula and animals in Dr. Van Helsing's discourse suggests Dracula's inhuman ability and actions, which emphasizes his danger to the narrators. The theory of degeneration in the 19th century indicates that "...the problem of the nature of the criminal--an atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the inferior animals" (Lombroso 468). In this case, Dracula's animal-like features reveal his degeneration since he has "the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the inferior animals," looking like a panther and a lion. More importantly, the definition of criminality by degeneration supports Dracula's threat and crime in Dr. Van Helsing's assumption. Such description also appears in Dr. Seward's diary about Renfield: "...he is himself zoophagous, and in his wild ravings outside the chapel door of the deserted house he always spoke of 'master.' This all seems confirmation of our idea" (Stoker 264). The term "zoophagous" reveals Renfield's degeneration as "...a return to the characteristics peculiar to primitive savages..." (Lombroso 469), which draws the connection between Renfield and Dracula. Dr. Seward's discourse here seems to unveil the secret of Renfield's mental disorder, proving Dracula as the "master" in Renfield's words. Thus, the narrators' reliance on written records shows their attempt to produce the knowledge of Dracula and substantiate their assumption, proving Dracula is a deadly threat to them.

Strangely, when Dr. Van Helsing tells other narrators about how powerful Dracula is, he is simultaneously trying to simplify Dracula's complexity. When comparing Dracula with animals like a panther and a lion, Dr. Van Helsing also expresses that Dracula has a "big child-brain" (Stoker 343). This phrase reduces Dracula's threat to the narrators. In other words, Dracula is actually defeatable because of the simplicity of his brain. This is

why Dr. Van Helsing emphasizes that "Well for us, it is, as yet, a child-brain…" (Stoker 343). Dr. Van Helsing attempts to comfort the other narrators' worry about Dracula's power, and then persuade them to join the murder of Dracula. Moreover, Dr. Van Helsing claims that "he fears us; he fears time, he fears want" (Stoker 347). The repetitive use of the word "fear" suggests Dr. Van Helsing's urge to find the Count's weakness for murdering them. Again, the repetition in Dr. Van Helsing's narrative implies a strong desire to kill the Count. Thus, Dr. Van Helsing's discourses here try to make Dracula manageable to prepare for the murder of him. Interestingly, it seems that Dracula's weakness or strength are both shaped by Dr. Van Helsing's discourses, depending on the goal Dr. Van Helsing attempts to attain.

Dr. Van Helsing's conclusion of Dracula is merely his subjective projection that stands for collective interest. Dr. Van Helsing shows the irrefutability of written records several times since he believes that dairies, as well as previous records, present the fact that "There are such beings as vampires; some of us have evidence that they exist. Even had we not the proof of our own unhappy experience, the teachings and the records of the past give proof enough for sane peoples" (Stoker 276). It is questionable whether Dr. Van Helsing trusts the written records overly because Dr. Van Helsing claims that the incomplete and fragmentary evidence is true, trying to eliminate other narrators' doubt by saying "Strange and terrible as it is, it is true!" (Stoker 224). Then, Dr. Van Helsing's overreaction becomes more obvious when the narrators plan to kill Dracula: "Yes, it is necessary-necessary-necessary! For your sake in the first, and then for the sake of humanity" (Stoker 359). In this scene, Dr. Van Helsing overreacts to Mina's doubt about whether it is necessary to pursue Dracula. Dr. Van Helsing's rage here implies his

determination to murder the Count and does not permit any factor to interrupt his plan. The repetition of the word "necessary" three times expresses Dr. Van Helsing's strong desire to prevent the nation from the Count's haunting. As a result, to Dr. Van Helsing the evidence is undeniable due to his eagerness to protect his people by destroying Dracula. Therefore, the narrators' evidence and discourses about Dracula are not likely to be the objective truth. Instead, the incomplete evidence leaves space for the narrators to make projections, motivating them to pursue the goal of saving the nation by eliminating the threatening vampire.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's term "subaltern" indicates the imperialist definition of the lower social class which is placed at the margin of society. The imperialist narrative of the subaltern, in Spivak's words, "is not to describe 'the way things really were,' or to privilege the narrative of history as imperialism as the best version of history…to continue the account of how one explanation and narrative of reality was established as the normative one" (Spivak 2002). Dracula is ultimately the unspeakable object that is modeled in the narrators' narratives. Like imperialism, Dr. Van Helsing's discourses about Dracula are "the best version" that must be true. Also, "For the 'true' subaltern group, whose identity is its difference, there is no unrepresentable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself; the intellectual's solution is not to abstain from representation" (Spivak 2006). The incomplete written records and Dr. Van Helsing's contradictory discourses both reveal the failure to fully recognize Dracula. As a result, Dr. Van Helsing uses his projection based on the papers to make Dracula fathomable to him. In other words, Dracula's threat is a representation that is created by Dr. Van Helsing's conformist discourses. Therefore, it is not important whether Dracula is truly dangerous or not

because the narratives are not for showing the truth of Dracula. Instead, Dracula's danger, as shown in the narrative, is the excuse the narrators use to eliminate the other who is different from the British.

Hence, the murder of the vampire Lucy reveals the narrator's intolerance of difference as well as the fear of being assimilated. Dr. Seward, who deeply loves Lucy, expresses his disgust to vampire Lucy by saying "...there was no love in my own heart, nothing but loathing for the foul Thing which had taken Lucy's shape without her soul" (Stoker 252). Lucy's "soul" stands for her English identity and common belief like other narrators. However, Dracula's assimilation takes Lucy's identity away since she has become a vampire, which is dangerous to the nation. In other words, Lucy now possesses Dracula's otherness that is destined to be destroyed. Therefore, the murder of the vampire is the way to avoid being assimilated by the other, as Dr. Van Helsing says, "But to fail here, is not mere life or death. It is that we become as him; that we henceforward become foul things of the night like him...We go on for all time abhorred by all; a blot on the face of God's sunshine" (Stoker 270). The phrase "...a blot on the face of God's sunshine" suggests that Dracula's assimilation is invasive to English culture. Dracula's otherness, like "a blot" on English culture, disrupts the order of English society by bringing the troubling exoticism. Thus, the murder of Lucy is also an elimination of difference or the otherness that violates English culture.

Finally, contrasting with the slow narrative speed before, the fast pace in Dracula's death scene shows the incredibility of the narrators' discourses. Surprisingly, Dracula is not powerful at all when facing the narrator's murder:

I saw the Count lying within the box upon the earth, some of which the rude falling from the cart had scattered over him. He was deathly pale, just like a waxen image, and the red eyes glared with the horrible vindictive look which I knew too well./ As I looked, the eyes saw the sinking sun, and the look of hate in them turned to triumph. (Stoker 417)

Dracula is so vulnerable that he cannot even defend himself from the "...rude falling from the cart" that had scattered over his dying body the image of his red eyes which look so threatening in previous narratives, becomes harmless here since "the look of hate in them turned to triumph." The transformation from "hate" to "triumph" in Dracula makes the danger of him, as told in the narratives, confusing. The contradiction also occurs when Mina says "I shall be glad as long as I live that moment of final dissolution, there was in the face a look of peace, such I never could have imagined might have rested there" (Stoker 418). The description of "the face a look of peace" furthers to indicate Dracula's powerlessness that is opposite to previous narratives. Dracula does not have "the strength in his hand of twenty men" (Stoker 241), as shown in Dr. Van Helsing's discourses, rather Dracula's "whole body crumbled into dust and passed from our sight" (Stoker 418). Stoker writes Dracula's death in a very short passage, which makes Dracula look like a vulnerable object bound by the narrator's interpretation. Thus, the change of narrative speed in the death scene causes the whole story to sound like a huge projection that aims to eliminate Dracula, who is the "other" in English society.

By applying Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra, the threat of Dracula is the hyperreal that is made up by the imperialist discourses. Simulacra, or simulation, is "...the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (Baudrillard 1483).

Simulation is not the representation of the "real" because what simulation presents is absent from the "real." In other words, the hyperreal is totally made up and has nothing to do with the "real." In the novel, the fast narrative speed in the death scene suggests the absence of Dracula's inhuman power. Therefore, his threat is the hyperreal that is fabricated by the narrators' narratives. Also, Baudrillard indicates that Imperialism replaces the "real" with the hyperreal:

> There is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality; of second-hand truth, objectivity and authenticity. There is an escalation of the true, of the lived experience; a resurrection of the figurative where the object and substance have disappeared. (Baudrillard 1487)

All discourses the audience can see in the novel, including different mysterious events, are "...a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality". There is no truth but only that of seemingly objective discourses from the narrators. More importantly, Dracula is the "object and substance" that hasdisappeared in the narrative because the knowledge about him is purely produced by the narrators. Thus, Dracula's silence in the novel suggests that the danger of him is the hyperreal made up by the conformist discourses.

To address the ambiguous ending of Dracula, Elizabeth Russell Miller provides possible explanations in *A Dracula Handbook*. The first assumption is that the ambiguity of ending is merely Stoker's negligence and writing issue as:

> ...he was guilty of sloppiness. He was also an extremely busy man with demanding job and did his own writing in his limited spare time. Furthermore, in the case of Dracula, he wrote the novel intermittently over a period of several years. This in itself would account for many of the errors, omissions and discrepancies. (Miller 174)

However, Stoker's possible carelessness works so well in shaping the Count's otherness:

> Take, for example, the ending, the shift from the stake to decapitation: that Dracula is rendered powerless, symbolically castrated, by having his head cut off; that Dracula was spared the ritual vampire death because his staking would be male to male; or that Dracula must be dispatched with weapons that are emblematic of British imperialism rather than a wooden stake, a remnant of Eastern European superstition.
>
> (Miller 174)

Like the story itself, it is not answerable whether the ambiguous ending is a deliberate design or just a random coincidence. However, the contradiction truly brings out the inconsistency of the "other" shown in imperialist discourses, causing the death of Dracula to represent Imperalism's elimination of otherness.

In conclusion, as a gothic novel, *Dracula* adopts a slow and ambiguous narration to show Dracula's horror and mystery in the English society. The fragmentary diaries and other written records suggest the lack of complete knowledge about Dracula. However, the incomplete evidence allows the narrators, lead by Dr. Van Helsing, to produce facts about Dracula, scheming to eliminate Dracula and his otherness. Nevertheless, the contrast of narrative speed questions the authenticity of Dracula's danger.

Unfortunately, the murder of Dracula makes *Dracula's* ending an enigma that can never be solved. However, Dracula will likely continue to exist as a concept in imperialist discourses, becoming one part of England's history.

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To Rot or Not to Rot: Moral and Aesthetic Struggle in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

Sammy Zimmerman

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" places the natural—specifically the sea—at the center of a struggle between supernatural forces over the power to arbitrate life and death. In this struggle, the "natural" relationship between life and death, as dictated by the Christian God, is identified with beauty, while that which is outside of or resistant to God's authority is marked by revulsion. Coleridge's nature is not inherently beautiful or godly, but vulnerable to a corruption which challenges the authority of God and threatens to make life revolting. Further, the human individual has the power to choose sides in this struggle—like the Mariner, to devalue life and become vulnerable to the wrath of dæmons, or to remain with God under a regime that deeply values life and is careful with death.

The Mariner's narrative begins with venturing out into the sea, sailing away from a kirk (Coleridge, line 23) to which he returns at the end of the poem (Coleridge, line 466). The sea is conceived as a kind of supernatural no man's land, a "...wide wide sea: / So lonely 'twas, that God himself / Scare seemed there to be" (Coleridge, lines 598-600), and in the faltering of God's authority, ungodly divinities are free to exercise

power. Coleridge describes these dæmons in the notes for lines 131-134 as "…invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor angels… They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more." It is these dæmons that bring about the Mariner's penance—Life-in-Death claims control over his life in a gambling match (Coleridge, lines 195-198) and the Polar Spirit causes the Mariner's suffering as retribution for killing his beloved bird (Coleridge, lines 403-405). These dæmons are explicitly designated as "wrong" in Coleridge's note for lines 393-401 and enter into a kind of struggle with the angelic spirits, against which they are, in the end, unsuccessful.

It is also these dæmons that produce the revolting natures in the poem. As the Mariner's punishment begins, he describes how "The very deep did rot: O Christ! / That ever this should be! / Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs / Upon the slimy sea" (Coleridge, lines 123-126). The sailors then receive a dream that reveals to them that these horrors are the workings of the Polar Spirit (Coleridge, lines 131-134). Contrast these "slimy things" with the water snakes that appear later (glossed as "God's creatures of the great calm" in Coleridge's note for lines 272-274): "Blue, glossy green, and velvet black, / They coiled and swam; and every track / Was a flash of golden fire. / O happy living things! no tongue / Their beauty might declare" (Coleridge, lines 279-283). The sea is a venue for at least two kinds of creatures: those rotting and revolting, under the dominion of the dæmons, and those vital and beautiful, still beloved by God.

The human body is also a natural object through which the supernatural battle manifests itself. The Mariner, for the duration of his punishment, falls under the category of the rotting and revolting creatures of the sea, grouping himself with the "slimy things" which "live on" even as the "beautiful" men lie dead (Coleridge, lines

236-243), having committed no transgression against God. This battle manifests in the body primarily in the form of rotting or not rotting. While the bodies of the innocent sailors, though dead, "nor rot nor reek" (Coleridge, lines 254), the Mariner's, though living, wastes away. Even now, it bears the physical testimony of his suffering in the form of gruesome distortion—the wedding guest expresses his fear at the sight of the Mariner, citing his "skinny hand" and strangely shaped body (Coleridge, lines 224-229).

The prevalence of rotting or remaining unrotted corresponds to an underlying concern about living or dying, and the power to let live or to kill. The dæmons and God represent not only two parties vying for authority over life and death but two distinct models of this authority. The dæmons' attitude is best understood through the character of Life-in-Death, who, along with Death, treats the Mariner's life with gruesome callousness in literally throwing dice for his fate. She, though at first seeming to resemble a beautiful woman, is herself an object of revulsion, likened to a victim of disease: "Her lips were red, her looks were free / Her locks were yellow as gold: / Her skin was as white as leprosy, / The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she, / Who thicks man's blood with cold" (Coleridge, lines 190-194). As she wins the Mariner, his punishment becomes life-in-death, which is a refusal of spiritual death even as the natural body dies. She perverts life, makes it into a cruelty, withholding the mercy that spiritual death in concert with bodily death would bring. "Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse," the Mariner laments, "And yet I could not die" (Coleridge, lines 261-262).

Conversely, God and the angelic spirits offer to the other crewmates a kind of death-in-life: their bodies remain intact as though living even as their souls depart into spiritual death. Rather than betraying them as the Mariner's does, their bodies in death exceed the natural, become more beautiful than they were even in life—incorruptible and singing sweetly "an angel's song" (Coleridge, line 365). God values life profoundly and is careful in giving and taking it, both spiritually and physically. Though the dæmonic Death takes the lives of the crewmates, God receives their souls "to bliss or woe" (Coleridge, line 221), preserves their bodies unrotted, and sends the angelic spirits to reanimate them in order to save the life of the Mariner. Even when the Mariner has been taken under the dæmons' domain, God loves him and values his life, sending through saintly intervention the vision of the water snakes, removing the albatross from his neck, through Mary sleep and rain to relieve his bodily suffering, and finally the angels to save him from the dæmons' power. God preserves an order of life and death which we find beautiful even when it is "unnatural," as in the resurrection of the sailors, nor does he allow this unnatural state to continue past its usefulness.

An important point here is that the Mariner has, through his actions, turned from God's vision of life and death and towards the dæmons, thus making himself vulnerable to them. The killing of the albatross, especially as it is a creature that the sailors recognize and receive "as if it had been a Christian soul" (Coleridge, line 65), represents a failure to recognize the inherent value of another life, an alignment with dæmonic callousness and a challenge to God's right and ability to act as the final arbitrator of life and death. By the end of the poem, and through his ordeal, he is reconciled to God and to God's vision of life as beautiful and valuable. His parting message to the Wedding-

Guest is "He prayeth well, who loveth well / Both man and bird and beast. / He prayeth best, who loveth best / All things both great and small; / For the dear God who loveth us, / He made and loveth all" (Coleridge, lines 612-617). If the sea is a site where nature may become either revolting or beautiful under the influence of the supernatural, man is not only vulnerable to this same influence but capable of forging his own alliances.

On the open sea, men are severed from the watchful eye of broader human society—or at least they may feel that way, as they feel that they have passed out of the domain of God. In Coleridge's time, the sea had real and symbolic significance as a medium of imperial domination and the transport of enslaved people across the Atlantic. Only a few years before "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," Coleridge had given a lecture on the slave trade, in which he decried the inhumane practice of enslaving African people and transporting them in "...the hold of a Ship with so many fellow-victims, that the heat and stench, arising from your diseased bodies, should rot the very planks" (Coleridge, "On the Slave Trade" 138). He further accuses British civil society of being unable or unwilling to acknowledge the horrors that take place far afield in order for them to enjoy tea and sugar at home, implicating the sea as a site wrongly dislocated from normal moral standards. "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," then, might be read as a reminder that this dislocation is only an illusion—that men are as accountable for their actions at sea as on land, and that each individual has the power through their own actions to align themselves either with the beautiful and godly or with the repulsive and grotesque.

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