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A decorative wreath of various autumn leaves in shades of orange, yellow, and brown, framing the central text.

*Pfleiderer  
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## **“How Rain Man Ruined Autism’s Image”**

**Fletcher Grey**

As I am typing, people are watching shows, movies, and other such forms of media about people on the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), such as *The Good Doctor*, *Atypical*, etcetera, and the majority of this is mislead to what people on the spectrum really are as a whole. This is a paper on the impact of popular media on the perspective of, and on the people with, ASD, as well as how things have changed over time. This cultural study is important, because without the analysis of how mental illnesses within the popular media and public culture as a whole are portrayed, that these stereotypes might continue to be shown in a positive light.

A Cultural Study is necessary for both a correction to our representation, as well as to help prevent negative reactions towards the people on the spectrum, when encountered in our day to day lives. This essay is important, because it has to deal with how these shows may be holding people on the spectrum back from future opportunities, and how they might want to live their lives. I use the term “us” and “they” because I too, am on the spectrum, and have in some smaller forms, some credibility on this matter. As of now, ASD within the public view is seen as those with the disorder being slow, methodical, unemotional at times, and detached from the more human motives, like love. Other portrayals include the supposed “helpless victim”, in which they cannot cook, clean, feed, and otherwise take care of themselves. A good example of this is Tiny Tim from *A Christmas Carol*, or Quasimodo from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. (Aruma, 2020)

These portrayals can take many forms, such as hindrance in the areas of self improvement through various methods, such as learning through observation, hands on experience, and mentorships for future opportunities in the workforce. The possibility of getting employment because of this hampering by social constructs and institutions, as well as how people can turn this around to serve

their own, more privatized needs, is bad. While the entertainment value is there, these compelling characters need to be better realized than when the ideas are being first consulted.

Now, this isn't to say that the advice was wrong for the piece we are going to talk about. It was actually the best of what was there at the time; and, yet, the times have changed. The book that this film worked within was the DSM-III, an outdated version of the DSM-V, which separates autism on a more diverse level, or spectrum, as it is now considered. But when these observations and thoughts are brought together, they perpetuate older information when there is no real commonplace for them to begin with.

The people in the focus of this piece (people on the autism spectrum) are being oppressed by the very representations of their behaviours and appearances in false, and oftentimes slanderous ways. Stereotypes, like that found in *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*, and *Rain Man* (which is the focal point of this piece), are the problem with representation because there is more than what people like us can do. The perspective being shown is based on one side, which is mainly the portrayal of more overly dramatized factors, and never with a sense of better realism.

By the showing of these skewed perspectives, people would then more likely think of categorizing people into these specific rule sets. If they do not fit those forms of a public definition, then how can the one's claim to be in that group become justified? The reaction to this would then result in the people involved disagreeing, saying that the person in question is not what they claim to be a part of, and get punished in multiple different ways as a result. A big example of this is putting them between worlds, like Achebe describes within his theory of *othering*, condemning them to pick between either the forceful compliance of one side of their lives, or secluded isolation from the rest of the world. Of course, disability in and of itself is not a complete identity, but something that contributes towards it.

But, we then have to recognize that stereotypes meld these ideas together, and refuse to give way until they are dispelled once and for all.

Another effect is the undermining of ideals through achievement, or saying “A got to where they are not because of their effort, but because they are A.” We of course acknowledge and understand this to be false, and yet there are still many within the world who think otherwise. In conversation, there are moments where undermining occurs due to the realization of our disability, in which word choices, tone of voice, and overall approach are changed. I, and many others within the community, have faced such events within our lives, and this happens more often than people tend to think.

The main theory that is going to be used throughout this analysis is the Critical Disability Theory, also known as CDT. This theory is crucial to the paper due in part to the “Sick Role”, a term developed by Tom Shakespeare and Marian Corker, who both researched how medical terminology and authority can impact those going through their day to day life with disabilities (Shmoop, Critical Disability). Basically, this is saying that as soon as someone is labeled as sick, impaired, or disabled, then they must play into that role for either the rest of their lives, or until declared “cured” by some figure of authority, which most reading this would probably find against their communal understanding. Yet, this emphasises the theory’s importance, because if the stereotype of a person within this role remains constant, then the representation of that type of person becomes further personified. The perception of these people then becomes harder to change, and trying to get something accomplished within their own regard would be nearly impossible.

A stigmatic trait is the trait from a disability that becomes the most recognizable, and then whittled down to the point of only being known by that one trait. (Shmoop, Disability Theory Buzzwords)

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An example of this is ASD, and how some believe that in an overblown and stereotypical thought, that people with it cannot communicate in any real verbal fashion, much less in an efficient and effective manner. Because this article is referring to the people with ASD in an example, this is a very generalized standpoint, and only recognizes those placed within the “sick role” by the popular media. Because these behaviours are not fully understood and expressed towards people unaffected by these behaviours though, these traits can get blown out of proportion fairly quickly, especially when not taught in an accurate manner.

Another concept from disability theory is the social constructivism model from Michael Foucault’s definition of the term *biopower*. Biopower is the way we understand, use, and shape our bodies, ideologies, and processes as a reflection and use of, the power/knowledge/social structures at work in our present day culture (Cisney and Morar, 2015) With Shelly Tremain’s addition to this definition, we are giving these specific points a better form of understanding, and setting boundaries for what falls in their definitive place, as changing a concrete form of thought is oftentimes hard to accomplish, and it helps to leave things within the rules presented. (*On the Government of Disability*, Tremain) This deals heavily within the portrayal of *Rain Man*, as we shall soon see.

*Rain Man* is a movie released in 1988, and depicts the way that the main character’s older brother Raymond, a patient at a mental institution with severe autism, acts and reacts to the world around him with his younger brother, Charlie. Now, Raymond himself is under the basic criteria for having ASD from the DSM-III-R, due to the timing of the movie. By modern standards, the DSM- 5, updated and compiled in October of 2013, improves on the IV-TR (published in 1994), and the IV version (published in 2000.) The III-R is radically different in terms of detail, diagnostic criteria, and the all around information, and as it should. But the reasoning for why the original book is being pointed to directly, is because of those very differences in definition and diagnosis. Time changes how we approach

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the topics at hand, and yet for some reason, the general public still uses this movie (and thus the older definitions) to ascribe this outdated diagnosis to people they encounter with this disability, even though the definition has changed over time.

The evidence of this is clear in shows like *Atypical*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog and the Night-time*, and *The Good Doctor*, all of which portray savant-like qualities, but not in the sense of passing their peers without clear problems of notice. The problem with this, as averse to autism portrayed back then, is that it paints autism as “the gifted child” archetype, where supreme genius is encountered all around. But that is not autism; that is savantism, which is an absolute rarity within the psychological field.

Savantism, formerly known as Idiot Savant Syndrome, is the ability to be extremely proficient in one skill, but with the downside of lacking this proficiency in various other skills and traits necessary to function within human society (Treffert, NCBI). In this movie, Raymond is a savant, because of his ability to calculate and count numbers at an abnormal rate. However, the use of savantism, in which the subject cannot do anything else effectively, (except for these specific skills) is what is being represented in place of ASD, creates some problems in the representation of the character in question. Since the 1980s release of this film and the subsequently raised awareness of ASD, viewers began to think of people on the spectrum as geniuses, massively capable and yet sociably flawed. The product of this stereotype then became readily apparent and widely accepted as fact.

The problem is not with the movie itself, but the way the perception of people with ASD stuck with audiences. It was one of the sole resources people had in really understanding Autism at the time, causing it to become a stereotype. The reason why this is in some ways derogatory is because of the variety of symptoms and/or conditions that autism appears like within the human subject. These various portrayals, while true in some regard, perpetuate that people with ASD are somehow smarter than the average person (as well as being incapable of being



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sociable with other people, which are both false.) Though positive in some of its intentions (using intelligence as a means of avoiding social and societal discrepancies), it can become very derogatory overtime. For a matter of comparison, consider the asian stereotype of “that person is Chinese, so they must be good at math.” These continued stereotypes, while not at most points obvious towards their intended targets, directly impact those with ASD.

With the original characteristics of Idiot Savant Syndrome from the DSM-III-R, Raymond in the film cannot function properly when a schedule is interrupted (American Psychiatric Association). A ritual is the repetition of thought and or action, that is used to relieve and oftentimes prevent anxiety, within the given subject. (dictionary.apa.org)

One of these examples of a schedule being interrupted, or a ritual being interrupted, is when they sit down at the diner at the 39:00 minute mark, where Raymond tells Charlie that they usually have pancakes on Tuesday. Charlie orders him some, Raymond says ‘Uh Oh’, as he does when something is usually going wrong, and he states that he usually eats them with toothpicks and maple syrup. Charlie tries to say that he has silverware, does not want to comply with what Charlie usually does, and after a couple more moments, Charlie grabs Raymond’s hair and hurts him, to which Raymond repeatedly says “Ow,” and pulls out a “Serious Injury Notebook” and writes everything down (*Rain Man*).

These rituals are things used by some to relieve stress and anxiety, such as “stimming”, known as self-stimulating behaviours, are defined as the repetitive movements or sounds used for calming the enactors down (Pietrangelo). Some would consider the bouncing of the leg while within a non-active classroom to be a stim, as that fits the definition of the term. Other examples of stimming include rocking, flapping of the hands, and the repetition of words and phrases.

An example of said stimming from the film is at the 43:00 minute mark, where Raymond repeats what is playing on the radio in the same kind of tone and

sound effects, though obviously not to the same degree as the announcer, to which Charlie asks him to stop. (*Rain Man*: 43:00). Though these physical elements like stimming are mostly absent at times, the behavioural elements are still present, especially for those higher up on the spectrum. However, this is due in part to how we learn from our surroundings. ASD is a developmental disorder, changes in behavior and neurology are still possible.

Some of the manifested elements are only a little odd by how people perceive them, to not at all, and this can also be of some benefit for the people around them. One such person is Greta Thurnberg, the young lady who helped to change the way we view the world, and how we wish to save it from the clutches of climate change. She herself is on the spectrum, and she has given us these tools to further the path of ASD as a whole.

But for some this change might not occur, and these manifestations that others might gawk at are present for their entire lives. The prevalence of these conditions among those who do not grow out of these manifestations (the lower functioning portion of ASD) are what most forms of media portray, instead of examples from the wider spectrum, where a person with Asperger's Syndrome (the higher functioning portion of ASD) might be better recognized. There are two completely different appearing groups, and yet, they both have the same disorder. The severity is what counts the most within these representations, as they can cause confusion between the different portrayals.

*Rain Man* highlights the lower functioning portion, and yet Raymond was presented as the higher functioning upon the film's release. Even in the movie, this was noted around the twenty minute mark, when his younger brother Charlie talks to his caretaker, Vern, for the first time, and learns of his condition. (25:00, *Rain Man*)

This leads to a host of issues, one of which includes the misrepresentation of the disorder as a whole, while also causing this abuse to occur when Charlie uses

Raymond to cheat the Las Vegas casinos out of their cash. This was achieved by using Raymond to count cards.

Another example of Raymond's lower-functioning characteristics come earlier in the movie, is when Raymond goes to the doctor's office with Charlie. The doctor says autism is "quite rare" because of the small town they were visiting, and this discussion leads to the money scene. He asks Raymond what half of a dollar was, and he says about seventy cents. The doctor then asks what the price for a new convertible was, and Raymond says "about \$100". (*Rain Man*, 1:03:13). These instances of characterization are good story elements towards people on the spectrum, but there are inherent misrepresentations that have reoccurred because of this.

There are aspects of ASD that people do not seem to realize exist, and that is mainly from the amount of exposure a person can get from interacting with people of these stereotypes on a more personal basis. The problem from this lack of exposure causes an assumption from these stereotypes to become a false positive. If all people on the spectrum are like this, or are even worse, then they should probably need our help. From this, social systems were founded, like that of Social Security Income (S.S.I.), funding these people that may not necessarily need this help, and be taken advantage of. This is not to say that this is a common occurrence, but this is something that can very well happen on more than one occasion.

The voice of an autistic person also tends to be warped, or taken advantage of, through these misconceptions. Even though they might have some form of voice for themselves, the people around them cannot overlook how one might talk, walk, act, or even react to certain situations. This is especially true for Raymond, since with his diagnosis being physically apparent, others are far quicker to both notice and then point out these flaws. And yet, there are forms of ASD that do not have physical manifestations. The behavioral aspects are what make them notice, but

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this movie did not carry that message due to the information they (the producers and staff) had known at that time. The main problem is not that it was limited in information. The problem is that the movie became too popular for the message it was trying to convey, which was autism awareness itself.

This is where the Sick Model takes place, because even though those on the spectrum might speak up about these issues, people will inevitably ignore them, even if they become a fixture of popular support. Autism Speaks is one of these perceived pillars of support.

Autism Speaks, through many private hedge funds, investors, and other interested parties in both political, psychological, and public factors, are being funded to come up with a cure for autism, as well as preventative measures. The problem is, autism is a neurological disorder. To try and cure an autistic patient would serve to completely rewire their neurology, making that a lethal endeavor. Though this group was founded in 2005, it carries with it heavy eugenic principles. They have also supported the efforts of the Rotenberg Center of Education, which is in both parts, shocking. Autism Speaks funded Rotenberg Center of Education in many endeavors, from the collection of Graduated Electronic Decelerator (in essence, a portable electric chair), as well as the program's way of advertising itself as being helpful, when it is anything but. (Dr. Hurt, Boston Phoenix)

According to ProPublica, Rotenberg mainly targets racial minorities within larger areas (such as New York, as well as the general Massachusetts area) to gather students. (Waldmen/Vognell, 2020)

But their methodologies have been marred with torture, forced isolation, and three students dying from these electrical shock devices. The United States Congress even had to step in, and pass a bill saying that E.S.D.s could no longer be used in this specific instance. One such case, a 19 year old non-verbal resident named Lina Cornelison, was subjected to the withholding of food and other provisions in 1990. While this case may seem like a tangent, they reopened that

case, and found that she was actually electrocuted to death. When looking at her behavioral records, it turns out she had been electrocuted about 88,719 times. (Autistic Self Advocacy, 2014)

In another such case, when a stranger made a hoax phone call to talk about two other residents, the staff took them out of bed, electrocuted them, and then destroyed the tapes that showcased these acts as a means of misleading a jury. This man then had to subsequently step down from his role as director of the facility. To showcase even further the viewpoints of this man to the curious reader, he also considered the use of cattle prods on autistic peoples (showcased by Ivar Lovass, who is talked of later.) To quote his thoughts of these same students:

“No matter how big, how old, how disgusting the student, we won’t say no.”

– Matthew Israel

This is an inherent abuse of power, and though it may not be as apparent to others, this is an already alarming topic that many have talked about, but never truly exposed on the national level. Because of its source of funding, Autism Speaks was further clarified in that it was looking for the cure to autism, to the point where only ten percent of the donations actually goes to the people who have ASD. However, people assume that most of the money goes towards those who might need it. It had to rebrand as a for profit organization, and the advertising has shifted from being focused on autism, to advocating for the foundation itself. From these efforts, April became Autism Awareness Month, having something called “Light it up Blue” month, which people then light blue lights to recognize those with the disorder (AutismAdvocacy.org, PDF).

Autism Speaks is a eugenic based foundation, and to advert itself as an organization that is not, is a blatant lie. Because of these misconceptions, from this film alone, it has helped to cause these aftershocks. Though those lower on the spectrum may not have a consistently apparent voice, they can be easily taken

advantage of due to their posing, as well as the system built because of it. Rotenberg, as previously stated, is an example of this.

Though those with ASD have problems communicating, actions can be taken to lessen the severity of behavioral habits. Communication skills, symptom management, stress and anxiety therapy, etc., but one of these treatments is infamous for its potentially lifelong side effects. Applied Behavioral Analysis Therapy, (ABA) was developed by Ivar Lovaas, and forces those with sensitivity issues to expose themselves to it in strong amounts.

This is much like a person trying to break a bone, and then having it heal over so that it may become stronger, but then become numb to the actual sensation in that area. For the sake of awareness, this is the same man who helped create gay conversion therapy (*A Study in the Foundings of Applied Behavioral Analysis through its Publications*). To even further the connection of these three people to this film, Ruth C. Sullivan, one of the co-founders of the Autism Society of America, gave advice for this movie (she has the final credit in the film.)

Most patients who go through this form of therapy never completely recover, leading to PTSD and other anxiety disorders for those who were put through it (ChildMind). The other reason why this specific technique is bad, is because that means professionals are forcing children (sometimes no older than five) to tackle these sensory problems head on. This further draws the attention of the inhumane treatment of people with ASD within the medical community at large.

The underhanded abuse and harm caused by these stereotypes can then go even further with that of the Wakefield Studies, that tried and failed to show that the MMR (Mumps, Measles, and Rubella) vaccine caused the development of ASD. (citation) These two studies were based on fraudulent methods, and was then disproven by many different teams, and then caused the revoking of his medicinal license. But, due to the fear that these two articles claimed to prove, people all over the world stuck with this false notion that autism could be cured, and also helped

to cement the stereotype of people on the spectrum needing help in every way possible.

To point this back to the movie, Raymond can function on his own to some degree, and with Charlie's wording to the wardens of the institution, he shows Raymonds ability to sign himself out and prove to those doctors that he can function. But this eventually backfires because he nearly burns the house down just thirteen minutes later. This perception eliminates the other possible variations of ASD, and reinforces what Autism Speaks, Wakefield, and Rotenberg are trying to portray, and yet there are blatant holes in this perception.

We, from the author of this essay to the reader, could also talk about how Raymond's physical appearance is also the reinforcement of stereotypes. But, for the sake of this paper's function, I would like to keep things as strictly as possible to the script.

This comes to my next point; the first impression. When most people think of this term (at least within the present and former appearances), it brings up the thought of how the first impression is almost always the most impactful. Just like it is for a job interview, the same thing goes for a television show, or more importantly, with that of raising awareness. This is true in this case, because after this movie was released, some comedians made fun of Raymond Babbitt because of his behaviours, while also having notable appearances in shows like *The Simpsons* (Season 5, Episode 91).

These first time jokes, one off zingers, or even profitable cases of advertisement, can lead up to varying degrees of representation, and the perpetuation of the *sick role*. In the news, for example, people usually report on a form of savant that can draw a perfect skyline view of the whole of Manhattan (Stephen Wiltshire), and only be shown about ten minutes worth of helicopter flight. Another might be severely disabled in appearance, and yet be able to play every song he ever heard, perfectly, and in different keys (Derek Paravicini). Finally,

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some might be incredibly creative and good with performing, like Tim Burton and (theoretically speaking) Emily Dickinson, though this last one is sometimes debated between the medical and literary communities.

This is something that tends to happen a lot with any first time appearances for something new. Creative people try to portray newer insights, and then toss those insights out for others to find and potentially explore later on. These imaginary elements tend to obscure whatever might be needing to be talked about, and further misleads these ideas. The image of ASD was blown out of proportion based on modern understandings, but was perfectly acceptable when it was released. This hurts the representation of people with ASD not because of the movie, but because of how it stuck with people for so long, and on such an outdated understanding as time passed.

This old fashioned understanding, though it becomes recurrent, exemplifies that former thought, and becomes the basis for a stereotype. This may not be the exact same in direct comparison, but this portrayal is very much like that of blackface in some regard, and is indeed ableist on many different fronts. To further reinforce this comparison, the majority of Rothenberg students are in the racial minority. Having Charlie tackle this situation of having an older brother on the Spectrum is also a bit shocking (for its time), because the first half of the movie is him abusing his brother's mathematical abilities. Charlie does this while treating Raymond as a glorified dancing monkey during the majority of this story.

Charlie takes Raymond to gather a total of \$80,000 to pay off Charlie's own debts by counting cards in Las Vegas, all while Raymond is held hostage for the sake of his father's inheritance. This whole movie showcases the abuse of an autistic man who did nothing to be placed in this situation, and yet, this abuse is glossed over. As a reminder, this is the driving force of the movie. Had this not occurred, there would be no story.



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All in all, this movie is the catalyst of indirectly causing abuse, misrepresentation, the continuation of ableistic ideas, and the perception of the autistic image. This needs to change, and activists have stood staunchly against this rampant abuse for decades, without the candor of the weary public. Through these (at the time) helpful portrayals, it was not the film itself that did a disservice towards those on the spectrum, but those that cared so fervently as to support the wrong people with these resources. By some means, this can be a systemic issue; but this is mainly showcased in the appearance of a stereotype made and preserved over the course of these last fifty years. As human beings, these people should not go through the same injustices as when people are in concentration camps.

ESDs, the killing of three innocent children, the fear mongering from a doctor's disproven theories, and the blatantly rampant repetition of these slightly altered stereotypes, helps to reinforce the supposed fact that ASD (in and of itself), is something that is in need of being consistently cared for at all times. Then, just as quietly, purged from the earth in the madman's quest for a cure that may very well never exist. To be in opposition of Joseph of Arimathea, the quest for this holy grail must end. People on the spectrum do not need this cure, and from the perpetuation of these stereotypes, the damage is more than enough to ruin people's understanding of us.

Let them be; give them another chance, with better representation, and leave these pretentious causes to the sands of time. Let them fall, and let those left rise to better represent those with ASD. Let these humans be human; stop treating them like animals, and stop treating them like a consistent source for savant and intellectual prowess. They are humans, just as much as anyone else might be. So give them solace in their own appearance, and then move forward just as suddenly, because the damage has been done. The time for mending is now, and that is all that needs said.

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## **“In a Cave of Constellations”**

### **Fall 2020 WRI 210 Class**

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This is the beginning of the hole where all the secrets go to gather, whispering into the red, white, and black silence.

The fact that you're no longer here to share my secrets with anymore will always cause me pain.

A Vial of Life, a Pedal of Disdain, I wisp away all my discomfort, wistfully compliant in what you never had to say.

I dread the day back, that means you can go back to hurting me, I will relapse and the worst part is that you do not care.

One elated, the other lifeless, on this crisp autumn morning in the woods.

Wondering how someone could be so thoughtful, becoming the flame to a cold heart.

And wondering if somewhere deep in your mind you still think about me late at night.

Drowning, drowning in all that is needed and expected, yet somehow, someway, floating just above the surface.

You hurt her; stabbed in the chest by the diamond you gave her, how romantic.

This one small gift still reminds me of you, haunting me every time I see it.

And I've fallen so far East I've blown West, if you could see me you'd be amidst

What a world we live in where those who need the most, receive the least, and those who receive the most, need the least.

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We can only hope that one day the cold hearts of the greedy will be warmed enough to spread their wealth.

An ageless beast lying dormant atop its cache of corruption and despicable humanity.

Bearing the burden of the sky resting upon Atlas's back.

Kissed by stars, hidden in a cave of constellations, the galaxy spins on

Bright lunar light illuminating the silver streaks

You turned my trash into a great treasure

What a pleasure we had together

I never, ever thought there would be better

I guess we are all changing like the weather

I guess we all have a scar in our deepest space

## **“The Darkness and Shadows inside James Joyce’s *Dubliners*”**

**Megan Zimmerman**

James Joyce has been referred to as a literary genius not only for his engaging stories, but for the multiple levels of interpretation and attention to detail within his works. His collection of stories titled *Dubliners* is no exception. Joyce claims, “When you think that Dublin has been a capital for thousands of years...it seems strange that no artist has given it to the world.” This collection is nothing less than masterful writing on a variety of levels.

The characters of *Dubliners* travel through the stages of life within the city of Dublin, and the details in the stories help to place the reader inside Dublin and get a feel for what life was like there. One of the elements that Joyce draws attention to repeatedly is the darkness surrounding life in Dublin. Joyce uses the contrast between light and dark to pronounce the problems deep inside Dublin. While reading the stories, readers will feel the overall effect of this implementation, but it is only by looking deeper into the stories and the darkness that one can see what truly lies at Dublin’s core.

Authors often use color and light, or the absence of, to add a level of emotion either shaping the storyline or reflecting the author’s own thoughts. Literary professor Yutong Xie states, “In literary work, color is often employed to create a certain atmosphere, portray the characters, or convey the author’s emotions” (61). This helps to show how the author and characters are interacting with the world around them, creating a relationship between the two planes (61). By establishing this connection, Joyce creates a realistic world with a touch of narrational brilliance. At first glance, the colors and light seem like a normal description to set the scene. However, Joyce uses color and light to place the audience into the mindset of the characters as well as the streets of Dublin. This combined with the accurate representation of everyday people in Dublin allows Joyce to achieve his goal, giving the world a slice of Dublin in the pages of a book.

Joyce paints Dublin itself in very distraught view. He uses the physical darkness around the city to show how gross, corrupt, and sad the city of Dublin is. Murphy states that Joyce's use of darkness around Dublin "could be to present a vivid picture of the seamy side of 'dear dirty Dublin' (98) ...The city itself is crowded, dirty, and decadent" (99). Most of the places in Dublin featured in Joyce's Dubliners are dark, brown-faced, or decaying. The opening scene of "Araby" is a blind end of the road where all the houses have the same brown, abandoned look. Joyce describes these houses as having "brown imperturbable faces" (21). This sets up the story in a gross, low-quality neighborhood that no one would want to grow up in. Even the activities that the kids participate in on the block are surrounded by this depressing and decaying aura. The text reads, "The career of our play brought us through the dark muddy lanes behind the houses where we ran... from the cottages, to the back doors of the dark dripping gardens where odours arose from ashpits, to the dark odorous stables..." (Joyce 22). Clearly, the kids have adapted to their surroundings and made do with their circumstances, but Joyce uses the word "dark" three times to describe the environment these kids have grown up in. In this sense, the use of dark draws on the gloomy, physically unpleasant setting of the city. Because Joyce seeks to create an accurate representation of Dublin, it can be assumed that this is the type of view people would see everyday in Dublin. An environment like this would affect any member living in it, so it's no wonder that Joyce was able to use "dark" in so many other ways throughout Dubliners.

The physical darkness inside Dublin itself leads to the darkness inside the individuals and thus larger organizations. Because of this, the social environment inside Dublin is very harsh and grim. People on the street pass each other in the shadows and do not stop often to talk with one another. It is mostly just small, quick conversations in the dark of the streets or pubs rather than lively conversations in the sunlight. For example, Farrington in the story "Counterparts" never talks to anyone when he is walking down the streets, whether it be during the day or at night. He keeps his head down and tries to get to where he is going as



fast as possible. The text states, “His tram let him down at Shelbourne Road and he steered his great body along in the shadow of the wall of the barracks” (Joyce 93). The people seem so caught up in their own lives that social interaction is almost futile. This darkness is laying so heavily on the shoulders of the inhabitants of Dublin that it is affecting their ability to live full and healthy lives. Joyce’s decision to keep the characters to the shadows instead of in the middle of the street creates a picture of cowardice and shame that lives inside each Dubliner, a personal darkness that they cannot escape.

It is not only within the characters themselves that this darkness takes shape, but it causes these individuals to act out against one another whether that be personally or as a group. These leads to a corrupt society where most people see success as pushing others down to get there. This can be seen at throughout the story of “Counterparts.” Farrington goes through a lot of stress and unfulfillment at work where he is constantly beaten down and commanded by his superior, Mr. Alleyne. Mr. Alleyne is choosing to keep Farrington beneath him, which he does through his orders and harsh tone. This then causes a chain reaction because now Farrington feels the need to have that sort of absolute control over a person and make them feel as small as Mr. Alleyne makes him feel. Farrington’s outlet for his emotions could be alcohol, but it is when he gets home that everything is revealed.

The scene when Farrington enters his house contains a lot text about the darkness of the room, hiding his son within. Dialogue such as “peering through the darkness” and “having the place in darkness” (Joyce 93) create an eerie feeling for the reader. Farrington then lashes out at his son and beats him for not keeping the fire lit. Throughout the day, Farrington seemed like an average Dubliner, disappointed with his job and drinking away his sorrows. However, once all the light is gone in the story, when it is no longer daytime and the lights are not on, Farrington reveals himself to be this vicious abusive father beating his son because he thinks this will make him feel better. Joyce intentionally places this scene in

darkness to connect the lack of light to the corrupt character that is hiding behind the bland faces passed on the streets. It's as if the reality of Dublin is hidden within its shadows.

Even the scenes of interactions between others are often without light and in a suspicious part of town. Because of the already-made connection between the scene and the storyline, the reader gets the feeling of shady activity going on in these moments. In "Araby", the narrator approaches a booth at the bazaar with a young lady trying to sell her wares. The narrator observes the booth and notices "the great jars that stood like eastern guards at either side of the dark entrance to the stall..." (Joyce 27). Immediately, the reader becomes anxious that something might happen. It is as if the darkness makes it difficult for anyone to see, the readers and the characters. The potential danger that the narrator is in only heightens as the story continues. The text reads, "The young lady changes the position of one of the vases and went back to the two young men...Once or twice the young lady glanced at me over her shoulder" (Joyce 27). Clearly, the young lady is as skeptical about the narrator as the readers are about her. Character is constantly in question within the stories of Dubliners.

Joyce goes on to write "I allowed the two pennies to fall against the sixpence in my pocket. I heard a voice call from one end of the gallery that the light was out. The upper part of the hall was now completely dark" (27). Joyce purposefully places these two interactions together, as if the sound of his money clanging sent the scene into darkness. This could suggest the true motive of the young woman and any salesman: money. Once it was noticeable that the narrator had more money than he was leading on, the scene was plunged into darkness to reveal the truth behind the whole interaction. Once again, it is in the dark that the reality of Dublin comes to the light.

The theme of corruption in darkness continues throughout these stories, but Joyce groups the corruption in some ways whether to input his own thoughts or to portray Dublin accurately. Joyce believed that the Church was as corrupt as the

rest of the people in the city. It is not surprising that he paints every picture off a priest to be in dark robes or their pictures yellowing from being antique and not improving. Murphy claims, “the religious darkness that covers Ireland is patently evident from the descriptions of the priests that appear in *Dubliners*” (100). In specific stories such as “The Sisters” and “Eveline,” Joyce chooses his words purposefully to allow readers to draw this parallel. In “The Sisters” Joyce writes, “... father O’Rourke and another priest that was there brought in a light for to look for him... And what do you think but there he was, sitting up by himself in the dark in his confession-box, wide-awake and laughing softly to himself?” (10) In contrast to religion usually being a holy light or white like purity, Joyce places the late priest in a dark place, laughing as if something was wrong with him. The ending of this story gets even darker as the last sentence leads the reader to believe that the two sisters might have had something to do with the death of Reverend James Flynn. Whatever might have been the effect of discovering the reverend, no one placed him in that confession-box in the dark but himself. This creates a direct link between darkness, religion, and corruption.

Then in “Eveline,” Joyce draws the character’s and reader’s attention to the picture of the priest in a home the narrator was leaving. It reads, “And yet during all those years she had never found out the name of the priest whose yellowing photograph hung on the wall above the broken harmonium besides the coloured print of the promises made to the Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque” (Joyce 30). Although the word “darkness” is not specifically stated, one gets the feeling of gloom and decay associated with it by the approaching abandonment of the house and the broken harmonium, which can no longer play music to lighten the mood of the room. This affiliates the lack of light and happiness with the old idea of relying on religion too much. If the religion was meant to be a central, celebrated part of Irish culture, Joyce would have kept the picture in perfect condition with candles and a tuned harmonium below that. Instead, he chose to make sure the image was

placed with brokenness and decay, signaling the faults within the Catholic church in Dublin.

Joyce also makes a lot of personal connections to the characters and their actions. This includes using “dark” to describe their visual features as well as make their bad decisions happen in the dark. The contradiction of being fake in the light and being real in the dark adds a layer of depth to the characters and helps the reader get a better feel for the atmosphere inside Dublin. Joyce uses this technique throughout multiple stories in *Dubliners*. This appears an awful lot throughout the stories. Xie remarks, “In such a social environment many of the characters...are not respectable normal people, instead they are drunkards, cheats, child batterers, boasters, gossips, and schemers; and most of them are failures in life and are quite ignorant” (65). Joyce often focuses on these characters more than the “normal, respectable” ones, adding more detail to their descriptions and making sure the reader get the impression that their appearance and actions are parallels to their personalities.

One example comes from “Two Gallants.” Within this story, the two main characters are schemers who take advantage of women to support their way of living. Page 46 starts with the description of Corley’s character: a confident son of an inspector. As him and his friend Farrington have a pleasant conversation, Joyce makes note of the moon. He writes, “As the two young men walked through the crowd Corley occasionally turned to smile at some of the passing girls but Lenehan’s gaze was fixed on the large faint moon circled with a double halo. He watched earnestly the passing of the grey web of twilight across his face” (Joyce 47). This notes the change in conversation. The men go from casual conversation to talk about the women they are working on and what progress has been made in trying to get them to steal money. Corley seems to become hungry with greed at the same moment he notices the moon as well. “He too gazed up at the pale disc of the moon, now nearly veiled... (Joyce 47). Joyce used the change in the lighting of

the scene to reflect the change in conversation to a more serious topic that reveals the men's true colors. Once again, the truth comes out when the light goes away.

The way Joyce describes the physical features of a person can also impact the perception of the individual and give a deeper look into the character's soul. Similar to how Joyce uses the atmosphere to bring out a person's true intentions, he makes the appearance of the individual often match the true identity inside. For instance, Joyce describes the man from "An Encounter" with a reference to his dark clothing and facial hair to suggest his bad intentions towards the children. It reads, "He was shabbily dressed in a suit of greenish-black and wore what we used to call a jerry hat with a high crown. He seemed to be fairly old for his moustache was ashen-grey" (Joyce 16). The black incorporated into the man's coat is Joyce's way of telling the audience that the man is not a kind man. There is also the use of "ashen" to describe his moustache, which allows the assumption to be made that whatever light did burn in this man has gone out. All that remains are the dark ashes that cannot produce any more light. Because of this description of the man, Joyce creates a creepy, potentially dangerous aura around the man that is only reflected in his unusual actions and the boys' responses to the strange man. In this way, Joyce adds another layer to his conceptual metaphor of darkness throughout *Dubliners*. Now the darkness represents not only groups of people and social interactions as a whole, but the personal darkness inside the inhabitants of Dublin both inside and outside of the text.

The darkness inside these characters does not only represent corruption and deviation from respectability, but also the extinguishing of the hope inside of them. While some of the characters do resort to cruel or unacceptable actions to counter the harsh life of Dublin, some simply choose to remove themselves from society, almost as if no life is better than one in the streets of Dublin. Many researchers echo this revelation of darkness equaling unfulfilled life. Xie suggests, "This sets the basic keynote for the whole book, and mirrors the 'darkness' of the Irish people's spiritual world. It implies that their society is lifeless and decadent like a desert"

(64). The idea of a lifeless spirituality amongst Dubliners is then restated by Murphy, claiming “They are all in... “the spiritual darkness that results from cutting oneself off from everything that is vital and alive and important” (99).

There are multiple examples of reclusive characters throughout these stories. One goes back to the late Reverend James Flynn from “The Sisters.” It was not just that one incidence where he was found alone in the darkness. The narrator claims to often find him alone in the dark. “Had he not been dead I would have gone into the dark little room behind the shop to find him sitting in his arm-chair...” (Joyce 4). It appears that the priest didn’t often have visitors, outside of the narrator, so him sitting in the dark room is Joyce’s way of showing his removal from social life in Dublin. In the description of the text, the priest did not seem to do much towards the end of his life besides sit alone in the dark with his snuffbox. It’s as if all that was left by the end of his life was the shell of a person. He chose not to interact with others or involve anything that could have added light and enjoyment into his life, thus sending him into darkness and ultimately death. There was nothing to keep him alive because he had nothing to live for. Joyce created a lifeless shell of a man to sit alone in a dark room, cleverly representing the dark, unfulfilled life of a Dubliner.

In another perspective, Joyce creates a cultural darkness around some of the characters in Dubliners. This cultural darkness means a disconnection between Dublin and modern times, as if its citizens are stuck in the past. This is most prevalent throughout “The Dead.” In this story, most of the characters are either elderly or lacking a cultural education. Murphy draws attention to multiple instances where this is true. He states, “No one understands Mary Jane’s academy piece; no one recognizes the names of the greatest singers” (Murphy 101). This is clearly evident as Joyce writes, “Four young men... [who had stood] in the doorway at the sound of piano, had gone away quietly in couples after a few minutes. The only persons who seemed to follow the music were Mary Jane herself...and Aunt

Kate" (186). This is important to note as it connects to the description of the two older ladies from earlier on in the story.

Aunt Julia, who does not seem interested in or recognize the piece Mary Jane is playing, is described as cased in greyness and shadows. The book states, "Her hair, drawn low over the tops of her ears, was grey; and grey also, with darker shadows, was her large flaccid face...the appearance of a woman who did not know where she was or where she was going" (Joyce 179). The cultural darkness that she is taking part of is physically represented by Joyce's words in contrast the words chosen to describe Aunt Kate. "Aunt Kate was more vivacious. Her face, healthier than her sister's, was all puckers and creases, like a shriveled red apple, and her hair, braided in the same old-fashioned way, had not lost its ripe nut colour" (Joyce 179). This is one of the few instances where Joyce used a bright color, red, to describe a person. It shows that there are a few people untouched by the darkness in Dublin. In this case, Joyce uses it to display Aunt Kate's cultural competence, which her sister and many of the guests lack. In this way, Joyce includes both light and color to draw attention to the distinct contrast of enlightenment and cultural darkness that so many individual characters in *Dubliners* are struggling with.

Perhaps one of the most obvious associations with darkness and the color black is death. Joyce features a lot of discussion about death within almost every story of *Dubliners*. In "Araby," Joyce explains how the narrator is now living in a house where a priest had died in the back room. The text reads, "One evening I went into the back drawing room in which the priest had died. It was a dark rainy evening and there was no sound in the house... some distant lamp or lightened window gleamed below me. I was thankful I could see so little. All my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves..." (Joyce 23). In this, multiple levels of darkness are surrounding this room and death.

For one, Joyce specifically makes it a dark rainy evening instead of a sunny morning that the narrator visits the room. Another layer of darkness is added when the only light is far away, leaving the narrator to stand in the room of the dead.

Joyce even adds a third layer of darkness to the narrator's senses, as the boy did not want to take in too much from the room previously filled with death. Because of all of the layers of darkness in this description of the priest's old room, it shows the emphasis Joyce places on the idea of death. While other scenes still have darkness mentioned often, it is only with the idea of death that he feels it is necessary to repeat it three times. Perhaps Joyce means to say that death is one of the darkest aspects of Dublin. At its core, perhaps Dublin circles around death. Since Joyce wrote *Dubliners* to be an accurate representation of the city itself, it seems logical that his emphasis on death in the text would parallel an emphasis on death in real life.

Throughout a lot of his work, not just *Dubliners*, Joyce focuses on the idea of paralysis. Because death, darkness, and paralysis are all highly mentioned in *Dubliners* it is safe to say that Joyce might view death as equally horrible to paralysis. Joyce still uses the darkness and lack of color to show how stagnant life is in Dublin. One scholar states, "So everything described with the color "grey" is aimed to focus on the theme of paralysis for the people in the society or the society itself" (Tian-yi & Xiao-yun 345). Grey, black dirty, yellowing are all adjectives that Joyce uses to create the theme of paralysis throughout each and every story in *Dubliners*. For example, "Counterparts" focuses around Farrington, a man who hates his job but still goes to it everyday. Even on the day he sneaks out to go to the bar, the scene is still gloomy around him as he heads back to the office, to the same job, to finish the work he couldn't get himself to finish earlier. Joyce writes, "He put his penny on the counter and, leaving the curate to grope for it in the gloom, retreated out of the snug as furtively as he had entered it. Darkness, accompanied by a thick fog, was gaining upon the dusk of February and the lamps in Eustace Street had been lit" (84). It is apparent that Farrington is reluctant to continue the job that is causing him dissatisfaction and sadness, but he returns anyway.



He is creating his own circle of hell and paralysis by not finding a way out of the job he hates or a positive outlet for his stress. Researchers also observed, “[the characters] are not satisfied with their life, their friends, their lovers, but they still have no courage to change their life or to leave” (Tian-yi & Xiao-yun 345).

Farrington, like many other characters such as those from “After the Race”, chooses to drown his sorrows in alcohol rather than try to solve the problem at hand. Joyce notes this as another level of darkness within Dublin as he writes, “The dark damp night was coming and he longed to spend it in the bars, drinking with his friends amid the glare of the gas and the clatter of glasses” (85). A lot of the characters in *Dubliners* are going through the motions without caring much for the quality of life they are living. Even those that seem to care are not willing to act on their emotions and decide to find unhealthy outlets such as scheming, drinking, and torturing others and themselves to cope with the paralysis of their lives. Once again, Joyce accurately traps the characters in a world of darkness that parallels the stagnant reality around both the characters and real inhabitants of Dublin.

James Joyce shows great mastery of language and storytelling through his collection of short stories *Dubliners*. He uses the darkness both surrounding the characters and inside of them to emphasize the truth that is roaming the streets of Dublin. Joyce stated that he wanted to give an accurate representation of Dublin through his literature, and *Dubliners* expertly places the reader inside the city to interact with the darkness themselves. This darkness creates multiple levels of depression, death, stagnation, corruption, and deceit throughout each story in *Dubliners*. From the rooms where priests have died to the dark evening sky that seems to follow the characters around, Joyce gets across his messages and themes without the reader needing to look too deep into the reading. However, it is by looking deeper that one sees the attention to detail and the intentional, exquisite writing that James Joyce is highly known for. In conclusion, Joyce incorporates the theme of darkness into his writing to accurately represent the people of Dublin in a

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way that brings their struggles to life through text and allows the reader to walk in the shadows of Dublin without putting the book down.

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## **“Breaking Boundaries: Gender Theory in *The Loud House*”**

**Shaadia Flint**

Gender theory includes several different concepts which can be used to focus on gender stereotypes in society. These stereotypes contribute to inequality between genders and binary thinking, believing a role, task, or occupation is meant to be performed by a specific gender. Before diving into gender theory and analyzing literature through the lens of such critics, it is important to explain the common use of the terms “sex” and “gender” as synonymous. According to the Sam Killermann’s “A Guide to Gender: The Social Justice Advocates Handbook,” sex and gender are two different ideas in which need to be understood and explained in order to properly discuss the topic. Killermann explains the differences between the two mainly lying in physical differences: “Sex refers to the objectively measurable organs, hormones, chromosomes, and other anatomy you possess (or don’t possess).” (Killermann, 74). Gender, however, can be discussed in terms of gender identity and gender expression: “Gender identity is how you, in your head, experience and define your gender, based on how much you align (or don’t align) with what you understand the options for gender to be.” (Killermann, 72).

Killermann explains that gender identity and the understanding of one’s own gender identity is based solely on your understanding of gender in a general context. Gender expression, however, relies on your representation of your gender “... through your actions, clothing, and demeanor ... and how those presentations are viewed based on social expectations. Gender expression is interpreted by others perceiving your gender based on traditional gender norms (Killermann, 73). With the providing of recent definitions for these key concepts in gender theory, one can step back from our current, advanced understanding of gender theory and observe the first ideas of the field.

Judith Butler originally gave us a new understanding of gender in her 1988 essay, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution” by describing it as a performance;

“If the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style.” (901).

This gave a new idea of gender, not as a strict identity but more fluid between the genders, rejecting binary thinking. In her writing she claims her ‘task’ is to understand the construction of gender “through specific corporeal acts, and what possibilities for the cultural transformation of gender through such acts.” (902). The repetition of acts could easily be halted and one could perform these acts as the opposite, which pushes them into the other gender.

In her writing, Butler expresses gender as a performance because of the similarities to theatrical performances, which can be performed as an act and simply taken with a grain of salt.

“On the street or in the bus, the act becomes dangerous, if it does, precisely because there are no theatrical conventions to delimit the purely imaginary character of the act, indeed, on the street or in the bus, there is no presumption that the act is distinct from a reality; the disquieting effect of the act is that there are no conventions that facilitate making this separation.” (907).

With this understanding, Butler highlights the flux in society’s attitude or acceptance of performance. In theatrical contexts, it is acceptable for one to perform behaviors of any kind, repeating acts of either gender binary. Yet, where an audience is unexpected of a theatrical show one must perform in a socially pleasing manner in the eye of the public. The actor may revert back to their realistic self and role while in the face of reality. Butler explains how this would allow one to revert genders in a sense that the ‘reality’ of gender is solely the performance; “Gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed.” (907).

The policing of gender performance by society forces and shoves one back into the binaries of heteronormativity; “Hence, as a strategy of survival, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences. Discrete genders are part of what “humanizes individuals within contemporary culture; indeed, those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished.” (903). When society believes a female is performing a behavior in a masculine way, or appearing in a way that society deems as masculine, society polices her back into the context which seems more appropriate. Butler highlights the problematic effects of binary thinking and policing of gender performance. Because the performance of gender is not based on any sound factors, it is ridiculous to deem one’s behavior as inappropriate for their gender. To punish, shame, or criticise someone because of a socially constructed cause is erroneous behavior on behalf of society; “...gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis.” (903). If gender is not as rigid as society constructed it to appear, it is in no way justifiable to condemn one to behave, or perform acts as they desire.

It is just as important to understand man’s push for binary thinking of heteronormativity as it is to discommend it. Along with Judith Butler’s discrediting of gender stereotypes, she includes reasoning on how heteronormative ideas came into play; “...cultures are governed by conventions that not only regulate and guarantee the production, exchange, and consumption of material goods, but also reproduce the bonds of kinship itself, which require taboos and a punitive regulation of reproduction to effect that end.” (905). The use of taboos and regulation helps pose a defense mechanism to the extinction of a culture. Although the protection of a society lies within reproduction, binary thinking also punishes performance of physical gestures as well as hobbies or interests. Under this thinking, society often attacks individuals for being attracted to material things that we have been conditioned to believe is fit for the other gender, thus harming those

who are non threatening to reproductivity. If an individual acts in a manner that social norms disapprove of, regardless of heterosexuality, binaries coerce the individual into thinking they have been inappropriate. This is the harmful effect of binary thinking in which Judith Butler exploited for the advancement of society.

For so long these ideas had been ingrained so deeply into society already, however. In the early 1920's Virginia Woolf used the term "androgynous mind" as a way to emphasize importance in displaying (or performing) both 'masculine' and 'feminine' qualities/behaviors. In her writing, *A Room of One's Own*, she addresses androgyny of the mind; "Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine, I thought." (Woolf, p. 82).

Woolf's (and partly Coleridge's) argument rejects binary thinking completely;

Coleridge certainly did not mean ... that it is a mind that has any special sympathy with women; a mind that takes up their cause or devotes itself to their interpretation. ... He meant, perhaps, that the androgynous mind is resonant and porous; that it transmits emotion without impediment; that it is naturally creative, incandescent and undivided (p. 82).

It is important to recognize the amplification of androgyny without praising either gender or qualities of that gender. The purpose of the androgynous mind argument is to seek qualities that are considered to be gendered from each gender; the best mind would be one that is equal throughout such binary genders.

This made a large attempt at equality throughout genders. Today, men and women possess most of the same public rights, as well as employed in the same fields. However, there are still many gender performance policers in the modern world as well. Occupations, personality attributes, even hobbies remain gender stereotyped. It is more widely accepted, however, to have the androgynous mind appear in literature to battle the binary thinking of society.

Chris Savino, creator of children's popular animated television series *The Loud House*, weaves the characters of the show with Woolf's idea of androgyny. The cartoon is a funny series broadcast for Nickelodeon filled with kid-friendly chaos involving the fictional "Loud Family" of the made up town of Royal Woods, Michigan. The show mainly revolves around Lincoln Loud, essentially because he is the middle child of eleven children, also the only boy of the bunch. The female-filled family partakes in a lot of havoc throughout the series, not only amongst the siblings but anyone who interacts with them enough such as teachers, classmates, or even the librarian. Savino interlaces androgyny throughout the series with the characters. This can be seen in the different interests of the Loud sisters such as the stereotypical fashion policing of a sixteen-year old and the explicitly absurd plumbing and mechanics expertise of a six year old. Aside from the absurdity, the fact that a female would practice such trades is unlike the gender performance stereotypes of this society.

The large number in the Loud family allows for many personalities and hobbies to take place on screen. Savino designs each character to have their own distinct interests and appearances. These traits vary between feminine, masculine, and/or androgynous between characters. It is interesting to dissect the characters and examine these traits in comparison to the ideologies that exist today regarding gender performance.

The eldest sibling of the Loud family, Lori, is one of the stereotypical and traditional characters of the show. She is a seventeen-year old girl who is obsessed with her cell phone and boyfriend. Lori is bossy and easily annoyed by her siblings, usually yelling at them to stay out of her bedroom. These characteristics are usually seen in our society's stereotype of an older teenage sibling. Lori is an interesting baseline of society because while she is a very stereotypical and cliché character, she does not particularly show traits masculinity or femininity rather she remains more androgynous. Besides the fact that her heterosexuality is highlighted by her prioritizing her boyfriend on many occasions, Lori could be changed into a male



character with the same hobbies and interests and would not necessarily be policed from either binary.

Leni Loud, the second oldest sibling, possesses very feminine character traits and performs her gender in accordance to binary thinking of gender. Leni is a ditzy, blonde-haired sixteen-year old who is naive and fashionable. While she is portrayed as an airheaded teenager throughout the series, she is considered to be a sweet girl who is skilled at fashion designing. The simple mindedness of Leni paired with her love for shopping mall visits and romantics, expresses commonly held stereotypes of female gender performance. Typically when a female is not exactly considered book smart or overall knowledgeable, she is known to be simple minded and ditzy. This type of character is usually always known to be a fashionista, probably being the most knowledgeable about fashion rather than any academic area. Leni is a traditionally stereotyped character in regards to appearance as well. She has blonde-hair, which is often tied to having a ditzy personality. The wardrobe of this character is also very feminine wearing articles like dresses, sandals, hoop earrings, and always sporting a pair of sunglasses atop of her head. The femininity of Leni shows Savino's display of gender stereotypes in society.

The next sibling, Luna is interesting in representing mostly androgynous interests but accepts and expresses her bisexuality in the show. Luna has a high interest in rock music and knows how to play instruments, primarily the electric guitar. The overall music interest of Luna would not particularly be considered masculine nor feminine, but androgynous as mentioned. However, it can be argued the gender performance of Luna has been affected by her musical interest. During the series, it is revealed that Luna previously had been a big fan of classical music and even once played a violin concerto. During this time she had been a quiet and gentle girl, even considered to be a "girly girl." After developing her rock music interest, Luna Loud has developed into a wild, outgoing, loud fifteen year old. As previously mentioned, Luna also discloses that she is attracted to a female character in the show, Sam Sharp, although they do not get together in a

relationship. The gender performance of this character is very interesting because of Savino's decision to adjust personality traits in relation to an adjustment of interests, such as her reconsideration of music. This can be interpreted as femininity being more closely related to classical music which is known to be more quiet and delicate while rock music leans to a more wild and aggressive side of gender performance, also known to be qualities of males or masculine figures. Luna's performance of gender transitioned from feminine to more androgynous. Her appearance is also more androgynous of the characters, with hair cut very short hair. Luna originally had longer hair when the series was broadcast as a mini series, which means Savino intentionally reworked the character's gender performance and decided to display androgeniety throughout.

Luan Loud is the fourteen-year old sibling of the Loud family who engages in comedic acts such as telling jokes and pulling pranks. Her favorite holiday is April Fools, where she becomes a prank-crazed outrage. The comedic interests of Luan can be understood as stereotypically masculine or more male-like. Typically, males are considered to be more joking and mischievous compared to females. In our society, the performance of the female binary is usually policed away from being a prankster and using deception. It is more acceptable for males to behave in ways seen as sneaky and mischievous. It is also unlikely for a female to be a 'clown' in the quite literal sense, in which Luan dresses as a clown for birthday party entertainment. Some of her favorite pranking on her family includes placing whoopie cushions under one's seat. This is interesting behavior to see because society will usually police females to perform their gender in a more serious way than the jokingly obnoxious manner of boys. Yet, Luan displays this obnoxious trait of stereotypical males her age and barely ever holds back on any of her deceitful ways.

Lynn Loud, Jr. is an especially interesting character of the Loud family for a few reasons. The thirteen-year old is a Jr., however unlike the traditional passing of names she is named after her father instead of another female family member. She

is a very competitive, sports-crazed preteen who displays stereotypically masculine features and interests. Her athleticism and physical rowdiness is steered towards interests of males in society. Savino intentionally allowed this female character to perform masculinity by her sport's interests and talents being in traditional male sports. Lynn is skilled in football, soccer, hockey, basketball, baseball, kickboxing, wrestling, and parkour. Lynn's interests display masculinity through the physical roughness of her preferred sports. American football, as well as hockey and kickboxing are traditionally male sports that involve intense contact among players. Because of the aggressiveness in these high contact sports, society deems this roughness inappropriate for girls to engage in. It is obvious that Savino is going against gender norms with the character of Lynn Jr. being the fact she plays baseball, which is a sport meant for boys only while softball is the similar but modified version for girls. Lynn Jr. also enjoys roughhousing with her siblings which is a form of play most commonly associated with males because of the roughness as well.

Lana Loud is another explicitly masculine character of the *Loud House*. This six year old is interested in playing in mud, digging in the trash, and getting dirty in any muck she can find. Not only does she like being dirty, she takes pleasure in her gross habits like finding chewed bubble gum in her trash diving and using the outdoors as her toilet. She owns a bunch of different pets such as a frog, a lizard, a snake, and even a rat. These animals are usually pets of males rather than females, although there is no clear reason why (which is to say the least, Butler's entire point). Reptiles are often thought of as slimy and icky, another reason Lana is so interested in them. The masculinity of Lana is completely evident throughout the series. Her habits and interests reflect those of stereotypical male characters. For a female to perform her gender in such a way in society would result in ridicule and complete disappointment. Females are taught to be very clean and prim. Lana is the complete opposite of these feminine rules set by society, as she has been known to shoot spitballs at her brother and talk with her mouth full. Her filth would be seen

in society as unacceptable and immoral. Males are commonly excused for their desire to get their hands in the mud and being unhygienic overall. Savino's absurd creativity is evident in Lana's character being that she is skilled in plumbing and mechanics. Although these skills and interests of Lana are extreme and unrealistic, they are clearly masculine trades in traditional gender norms. Not only are these trades seen as requiring hard work, but they require dirty work in which society sees neither fit for a female.

Lana's younger twin sister, however, plays the role of a female very genuine to societal codes. Lola is completely opposite of her twin sister and finds interest in all things girly. Lola participates in beauty pageants and fashion shows, which she wins most of the time. Unlike Lana, Lola performs gender according to her binary, as she is proud to be a prim and proper young lady, whose beauty is something to be recognized. Lola is always seen wearing a tiara atop of her head, which emphasizes the overly feminine princess she is.

*The Loud House* has been recognized for Savino's binary-breaking decisions of society's stereotypes, including the accepting portrayal of a gay interracial married couple, the McBride's. The presentation of the McBride family earned recognition by GLAAD, a media foundation recognizing LGBT members in the media. Savino creates a safe environment for populations which aren't usually portrayed in children's media. The idea of heteronormativity is enforced in all settings regardless of the audience. The McBride family has been represented positively in the series, yet they are not under the scope of sympathy or much importance. This is important because Savino is displaying the representation of diversity but without putting them in a spotlight of being *different*. This goes along with Butler's theory of gender performance in a way to say performance is merely someone's personality and personal choice; there's no need for restricting or enforcing any specific performance.

The theoretical argument of gender is important to society and the constructs it puts on us. Recognizing the need to break binary thinking is necessary

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for better society. When people police gender performance towards binaries, it prevents others from reaching their full potential in skills they may have perfected. Policing gender, according to Judith Butler, is absurd being the construction of gender is completely made by society. Masculinity and femininity should co-exist in all humans, as Virginia Woolf mentioned, without any enforcement of limitations. Chris Savino recognizes the freedom of gender performance in *The Loud House* with characters performing with and against gender stereotypes. Savino expresses character's interests and skills exactly as that; interests and talents of a person, not a gender.

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## **“Percy Jackson and the Arendtian Revolution”**

**Alison Blythe**

Through his book series *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, written for middle grade readers, Rick Riordan simultaneously reimagines both the world of Greek mythology and modern day America, placing his characters on mythical journeys across the United States. The five books of the series are made up of several adventures by the main character Percy Jackson and his friends, with a growing revolution threading the novels together and creating the climax of the overall story in the fifth book, *The Last Olympian*. Through his reimagination of the world, Riordan is able to influence the imagination of his young and impressionable readers to convey a political statement about revolution and the importance of maintaining order. Riordan’s imagination of revolution developed throughout the novels is consistent with the political ideology of Hannah Arendt presented in her book *On Revolution*. Arendt writes her theories in the context of the Cold War, under the constant threat of nuclear holocaust. While there is no evidence available to say whether Riordan ever encountered her specific views or not, her ideas are an excellent framework through which to contextualize and view the revolution he describes to his audience. Riordan’s overall lesson to his young readers is that it is always better to work within a political system to enact change, even if that system is corrupt, than it is to destroy the system at the expense of countless innocent lives, and like Arendt, that revolution is not the answer to society’s problems.

*The Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series follows the adventures of the titular character and his friends, most notably his best friend Annabeth Chase, daughter of Athena. Percy is the son of Poseidon, one of the “Big Three” gods, and a mortal woman Sally Jackson. As a child of a Big Three god, he is especially powerful for a demigod. Soon after finding out about his powers and status as a half-god, he learns that he is also the center of an important prophecy that says the next time a child of the Big Three makes it to age sixteen, something will happen that has the

potential to oust the Olympian gods from their place in keeping order over the world. His goal becomes to train himself as best as he can at Camp Half-Blood, a magically protected camp meant to teach demigods how to defend themselves against the monsters in the outside world. Little does he know, the prophecy refers to the fact that he will be instrumental in bringing down a revolution against the gods. Percy's first camp-counselor turned mortal enemy Luke Castellan, son of Hermes, kick starts the revolution thanks to the influence (and help) of Kronos, the Titan King the gods overthrew millenia ago. Luke and Kronos' personal goals are to destroy the Olympians, and by extension, Western civilization, though many of their demigod followers they accrue mostly just want their godly parent to be a better, well, parent.

In Riordan's literary universe, the Western civilization Luke and Kronos plan to destroy is "a living force. A collective consciousness that has burned bright for thousands of years. The gods are a part of it."<sup>1</sup> The gods are so closely tied with Western civilization that their death would mean the end of it, or vice-versa. In *The Last Olympian*, camp director Dionysus warns Percy that the removal of the gods from power and their subsequent death would mean "your entire society would dissolve. Perhaps not right away, but mark my words, the chaos of the Titans will mean the end of Western Civilization. Art, law, wine tastings, music, video games, silk shirts, black velvet paintings - all the things that make life worth living will disappear!"<sup>2</sup> And, of course, if successful in their revolution, the freed Titans would wreak general havoc over the mortal world and would most likely kill the human race fairly quickly, and not even necessarily on purpose. Percy has proof of this probability from the trail of destruction left behind as the Titan Typhon makes his way from Mt. St. Helens to Manhattan, having a similar effect to a particularly intense storm system that destroys large quantities of infrastructure and architecture- and this is while he has the full might of the Olympians distracting

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<sup>1</sup> Rick Riordan, *The Lightning Thief*, (2005; repr. , New York: Disney Hyperion, 2006), 72.

<sup>2</sup> Rick Riordan, *The Last Olympian*, (2009; repr., New York: Disney Hyperion, 2011), 268.



him.<sup>3</sup> The chaos he causes and the capability for destruction Typhon exhibits is only a taste of what will happen to the mortal world when all the Titans are free, without the interference of the gods, and for significantly longer than the week that Typhon is loose.

The revolution led by Luke and Kronos fits the definition of a revolution created by philosopher and political theorist Hannah Arendt in her book *On Revolution*. Her understanding of revolution and the way she describes how revolutions are thought about in the wider society post-World War II is apparent in Riordan's novels. The book was first published in 1963, a year before Riordan's birth, but the worldview she describes is the one that Riordan would have grown up hearing, and of course would influence the way he imagines the world. In Arendt's understanding of the concept, in order for a conflict to be called a true revolution, "the idea of freedom and the experience of a new beginning should coincide."<sup>4</sup> Luke in particular buys into this idea of a new beginning, saying "they should have been overthrown thousands of years ago...their precious Western Civilization is a disease, Percy. It's killing the world. The only way to stop it is to burn it down to the ground, start over with something more honest,"<sup>5</sup> which will lead to a new "Golden Age."<sup>6</sup> Luke, Kronos, and those who follow them all want freedom from the gods, in different ways. Luke and many of the demigods who follow him want to be recognized by and to not be used as pawns of their godly parents. As Arendt says, they choose to "pose the threat of total annihilation through war against hope for the emancipation of mankind through revolution,"<sup>7</sup> taking the chance of the mortal world collapsing with the hope of a better life for themselves. On the other hand, Kronos and the other Titans mostly just want to be free from their various prisons, take revenge on their captors, and recreate their glory days. The monsters who follow them thrive on the chaos the war brings, and want the freedom to embrace

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<sup>3</sup> *The Last Olympian*.

<sup>4</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, (1963; repr. United States of America: Penguin Books, 2006), 19.

<sup>5</sup> *The Lightning Thief*, 365.

<sup>6</sup> *The Lightning Thief*, 369.

<sup>7</sup> Arendt, 1

their evil nature and eat as many half-bloods and mortals as possible. There is a fine line between the idea of freedom for this group of Luke's followers and anarchy, but the ideal that the more rational demigods that Riordan wants his readers to empathize with is freedom. According to Hannah Arendt, freedom is often used to "justify what on rational grounds has become unjustifiable," meaning horrific violence, and this is certainly what the rebellious demigods do.<sup>8</sup> This justification of violence is what led to the total war of World War II, Arendt explains, and what leads Luke to seek out Kronos in the first place. Kronos and the other Titans can provide an allegory to the threat of nuclear war, as their being unleashed with full power onto the mortal world would lead to mass death and destruction on an unimaginable scale, much worse than the comparatively slight damage Typhon causes on the American midwest. Percy, Annabeth, and the other campers are trying to prevent the possibility of this sort of total war in the mortal realm.

From the loyal demigod perspective, the complaints the revolutionaries have against the gods are totally justifiable to be upset about, but their revolution is the wrong way to go about solving their problems. Especially in the first two books, Percy and Annabeth very much agree with their former friend and mentor Luke. When Annabeth first describes the gods to Percy when he initially learns he is a demigod, she explains to him "the gods are busy. They have a lot of kids and they don't always... Well, sometimes they don't care about us, Percy. They ignore us."<sup>9</sup> This act of ignoring of their children can come in a variety of ways- failing to claim their children as their own, failing to bother to meet their kids even if they do claim them, and the worst of all, never directing their children to camp where they would be safe from the threat of monsters. When Percy goes on his first quest, he "didn't know whether to feel resentful or grateful or happy or angry. Poseidon had ignored me for twelve years. Now he suddenly needed me" to be his mortal hero.<sup>10</sup> In general, Percy and Annabeth agree that all demigods should be claimed, that their

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<sup>8</sup> Arendt, 4.

<sup>9</sup> *The Lightning Thief*, 96.

<sup>10</sup> *The Lightning Thief*, 145.

parents should make more of an effort to not make their children feel so abandoned, and not use their children simply as pawns in their plans on a regular basis. However, they do not join Luke's revolution for two main reasons. The first relates to the fact that the gods, no matter how horrible they can be to the demigods, are family. Percy takes to heart a conversation he has with Luke's father Hermes soon after Luke's betrayal of the gods is revealed, who tells him "you don't give up on your family, no matter how tempting they make it. It doesn't matter if they hate you, or embarrass you, or simply don't appreciate your genius for inventing the Internet."<sup>11</sup> Beyond their family ties and the shaky but growing bonds Percy and Annabeth have with their parents, they also realize how "Indeed it seems so obvious that it is a very different thing to risk one's own life for the life and freedom of one's country and one's prosperity from risking the very existence of the human species for the same purpose"<sup>12</sup> like Luke has done. Arendt is referring, of course, to nuclear war. But it is equally applicable to letting the Titans take over the earth just to achieve one's own ends. The gods may be corrupt and horrible parental figures, but Percy and Annabeth also realize they provide stability to the world of mortals, who the demigods generally strive to protect. While the mortals can certainly still get themselves into trouble, the laws of nature are upheld by the gods fulfilling their duties to the people that sustain their life force through their internal belief in Western civilization. The gods represent order, while the Titans represent chaos. No matter how mad Percy, Annabeth, or their allies might get at the gods, they choose to protect the relative "good" of the gods over the relative "evil" of the Titans, and maintain the stability in the mortal world as far as they are able to.

One of the most important scenes in the book is the practical end to the revolution where even the instigator Luke realizes what he is unleashing. As the temporary host body for Kronos during his regeneration process, he alone is able to kill Kronos. To prepare his body for the Titan, Luke took a dip in the river Styx like

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<sup>11</sup> Rick Riordan, *The Sea of Monsters*, (2006; repr., New York: Disney Hyperion, 2008), 104.

<sup>12</sup> Arendt, 3.

Achilles had as a child. His soul became tethered to one carefully hidden and protected spot on his body that Luke chose and only he knows the exact location of, and the rest of him became impervious to physical attack. He takes control of the shared body in the climax of *The Last Olympian*, and sacrifices himself to prevent the world from being destroyed by the Titans. That Riordan would have his most zealous demigod supporter of the revolution recognize the error of his ways and choose to end the revolution at the cost of his own life shows Riordan's value of upholding the system for the purpose of preventing chaos and protecting order, and also sends a message that redemption is always possible.

Thanks to the sacrifice of Luke and the leadership of Percy and Annabeth, the demigods who choose to fight on their parent's side won the war, and as a reward are able to start enacting change to the failing system that allowed for the revolution to begin in the first place. After his heroic deeds in the war against Kronos, Percy turns down an offer for immortality in order to hold the gods to several promises on behalf of the demigods. He tells the room of Olympians gods "Kronos couldn't have risen if it hadn't been for a lot of demigods who felt abandoned by their parents...They felt angry, resentful, and unloved, and they had a good reason."<sup>13</sup> His demands to enact change include that the gods must claim all of their demigod children by thirteen in order to protect them from monsters, the minor gods should have cabins at Camp Half-Blood so that their claimed children have somewhere to go, and the gods will make sure that all half-bloods are trained to survive in the real world, regardless of their parentage.<sup>14</sup> Percy would not have been able to enact change in the system without also fighting to uphold it, and his actions in support of the system as a whole were rewarded with an opportunity to do so.

The way Riordan's revolution plays out and his political message is particularly important given his intended audience. Riordan initially started writing the series to give his middle school students something he authored to read instead

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<sup>13</sup> *The Last Olympian*, 353

<sup>14</sup> *The Last Olympian*, 353-354.

of his age-inappropriate adult mystery novels.<sup>15</sup> As a result of his experience teaching English to young students, he understood the impact popular literature can have on the minds and imagination of young readers. In a list of interview questions on his website, one of Riordan answers reflects on his goals with the Percy Jackson series by comparing it to the success of the Harry Potter series, pictured below.<sup>16</sup>

Having said that, do I hope readers of Harry Potter will enjoy my series? Of course. Any comparison to Rowling is high praise, because I'm a huge fan of her work. I totally understand why kids love Harry Potter. The effect those books have had on young readers is hard to overestimate. In my years as a teacher, I've never seen anything that energizes students like Harry Potter. I used to come into my classroom and find students reading Sorcerer's Stone for the thirteenth or fourteenth time, just because they wanted to. I would say, "That's a great book, but aren't you getting tired of it?" The student would always look at me sadly and say, "Yes, but there just isn't anything else this good." After hearing that for a few years, I realized there was an unfulfilled need for more children's literature that impacted kids the way Harry Potter did. I decided to try doing something about it — I knew young readers. I understood what they liked. The Lightning Thief is the result. Whether I succeeded or not, I'll let the kids decide.

Riordan keeps his intended audience in mind in every writing decision he makes. He chooses to portray this specific political message to this specific age group in order to pass on his understanding of the world informed by the political situation of his youth, and as a former English teacher he knows exactly the extent of impact a popular novel like his can have on young readers. He may no longer be a classroom teacher, but he shares a lesson to his audience about how they should deal with political conflict. They should be working within a system and not just trying to blow it up and start over, and should always attempt to predict and prevent the possible unintended consequences of their actions. On a personal level,

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<sup>15</sup> "An Interview with Rick," *RickRiordan.com*, accessed December 4, 2019, <http://rickriordan.com/about/an-interview-with-rick/>.

<sup>16</sup> "An Interview with Rick."

I think this is a good and important lesson to middle-grade readers, especially in a democratic country where the best way to get something changed is to take action within the political system. In addition, this lesson can only really be taught by a conversation between one imagination to another. Overall, the series shares a sense of how the world should run in order to encourage children to look for legal ways to solve their problems, with minimal violence and collateral damage. It is also an attempt to create a realization that order is better than chaos, no matter how right the cause, and it is best to take slow steps towards change than to create sweeping movements that have the potential to hurt a lot of people to maintain order.

While Riordan teaches a solid lesson and is aware of the impact of the literary choices he makes, not all authors have the understanding of their potential impact. In addition, “a good number of teens do read and read a great deal. In fact, teens are buying books at a faster rate in decades...when selecting books for pleasure reading, these voracious teen readers seldom choose school-approved novels.”<sup>17</sup> With the amount of reading younger readers partake in on the rise in correlation with the amount of books aimed at their age group rising in the market, parents and educators cannot regulate every book, and by extension political and social lesson, young readers are receiving. Teens also do not self-regulate what they are reading, either, and “teen readers, as do the majority of adults, seldom choose books on literary quality. They choose books based on a connection they make with a character, or with the plot or theme.”<sup>18</sup> This potential lack of literary quality is paired with the potential for a poor political lesson to be conveyed. These political lessons are often not as explicit as an Arendtian revolution, but can be more general lessons such as the balance of order and chaos in Percy Jackson’s world. It is these more general lessons that have the potential to be harmful if not handled correctly.

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<sup>17</sup> Pam B. Cole, *Young Adult Literature in the 21st Century*, (New York, New York: McGraw Hill Higher Education, 2009), 37.

<sup>18</sup> Pam B. Cole, 39.

Popular novels have take-aways and have effects on readers, especially young ones. In the foreword to *Young Adult Literature in the 21st Century*, Chris Crutcher says “I have long thought that YA literature is considered the red-headed stepchild of “real” literature and that it is relegated to the same back corner in our culture that we also consign to teenagers.”<sup>19</sup> This ‘fake’ literature is often ignored in academic settings. There is a movement to use it as a teaching tool in American classrooms today, but scholars have in general not given it the same attention that they have more classic texts. This fact is problematic because authors like Rick Riordan are having an impact on young minds, and noting political and social issues in their works are important when considering how young people conceive of the world today. Political and literary theories should be applied to these works just as much as standard literature, because they are simply being read more than the classics are, and the intended audience will be even more likely to buy into the lessons the authors provide. I know I personally reacted to this series differently as a twenty year old in my third year of college than I did when I first read *The Last Olympian* in 2010 when it was first published. Now, I am able to see the reasons why Luke felt justified in his actions throughout the series, but back in 2009 I hated that he was given a chance at redemption, and honestly forgot this part of the story until I went back and reread it. This series, as well as Riordan’s four other series, have been extremely influential in how I personally think about the world. While not everyone feels the same way about his work specifically, I think everyone has that author they grew up reading who shaped their thinking. With the possibility for impact that popular fiction writers can have, it is time society takes a closer look at the messages different series and authors are conveying, in order to be able to have conversations with children about how they are interacting with and being shaped by the politics in popular media.

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<sup>19</sup> Pam B. Cole, xiii.

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## **“Feminists Versus the Apocalypse:**

### **A Dissection of the Political Philosophies Present in Feminist Dystopias”**

**Alyssa Edmond**

The political philosophies of feminism are overwhelmingly prevalent in the plotlines of feminist dystopic novels. Feminism has developed greatly over the past two centuries, going through three distinct waves of thought. Within each of these waves, female authors have created and published dystopian novels that perpetuate the fears of feminist philosophy. Through four different novels, *Swastika Night*, *The Handmaid’s Tale*, and *The Hunger Games*, the impact of feminism is astounding. First-wave feminism and *Swastika Night* portray the outcome of a society that never grants women autonomy. Second-wave feminism and *The Handmaid’s Tale* shock audiences by demonstrating a government that never gives women the right to their bodies. *The Hunger Games* and third-wave feminism center on the damaging effects of reality television and stereotyping women. Dystopian literature, by definition, portrays scenarios that are characterized by extreme injustice or suffering. Feminist dystopias specifically, show the type of world that feminists are fighting against and serve as a warning to readers. The political philosophies of each wave of feminism not only had an impact on the dystopic literature of the time, but practically mirror the plotlines, characters, and societies present in feminist novels.

#### **First Wave Feminism and *Swastika Night***

The start of feminism is not well defined. Some historians deem Abigail Adams as the first feminist. She consistently urged her husband, John Adams, to keep in mind the perspective and rights of women, even directly telling him in a letter to “not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands.”<sup>20</sup> However, the origin of feminism as a movement could perhaps be traced back to

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<sup>20</sup>Nelson, Louis. “Letter Recounts Abigail Adams’ Feminist Initiative, March 31, 1776.” POLITICO, March 31, 2018. <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/03/31/this-day-in-politics-march-31-1776-491169>.

the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848. Led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, around 300 women, and a few men, attended this first women's rights convention for two days.<sup>21</sup> Following this convention, however, there seemed to be silence on feminism. It was not until the late 1910s that feminism began to rear up again for the women's suffrage movement. First-wave feminism was then constructed around proving that women were worthy of autonomy, independent of the men surrounding them. Feminists of this era focused on the concept that women were just as deserving of human rights as men.<sup>22</sup> A major accomplishment was the ratification of the 19th amendment in 1920. From there on, women began to fight for equality based on labor laws and autonomy. Through the entire first wave movement, women were seeking the approval of men- be it socially or legally.<sup>23</sup> First-wave feminism centered on proving to men, and the world, that women are human beings of merit on their own. This concept is heavily prevalent in the storyline of *Swastika Night*.

*Swastika Night*, written by Kathrine Burdekin under the pen name Murray Constantine, was published in 1937 - two years before World War II began. In Burdekin's dystopian world, Hitler and Germany not only won WWII but were able to create a cult-esque world around Hitler himself. In this world seven hundred years after the war, there are only two "superior races"; German and Japanese are the only powerful nations to survive WWII. The Germans have conquered subsequent races of England and France, while the Japanese control the Americas, Asia, and Australia.<sup>24</sup> In the countries under Germany's rule, history has been completely rewritten. Anything not published by the German government has been destroyed, so there is no way for citizens to know any

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21 Nelson, Louis. "Letter Recounts Abigail Adams' Feminist Initiative, March 31, 1776." POLITICO, March 31, 2018.

<https://www.politico.com/story/2018/03/31/this-day-in-politics-march-31-1776-491169>.

22 Pima Library. "First Wave Feminism and the Seneca Falls Convention." Pima County Public Library. Accessed November 24, 2019.

<https://www.library.pima.gov/blogs/post/first-wave-feminism-and-the-seneca-falls-convention/>.

23 Foley, Barbara. "Women and the Left in the 1930s." *American Literary History* 2, no. 1 (1990): 150-69.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/489816>.

24 Burdekin, Katharine, and Murray Constantine. *Swastika Night*. Page 77. Place of publication not identified: Feminist Press, 1985.

better than what they have been taught. They have been taught that Hitler was not born of a woman but born of a god. He was strong, tall, and blonde with blue eyes - the epitome of perfection.<sup>25</sup> Since their god, Hitler, was not born of a woman, women are seen as the lowest status of beings, used only for their breeding purposes. Hermann is a young adult in the German army, who has made a unique friend in an Englishman, Alfred. Hermann is a strict believer in the regime he was raised in, while Alfred is not as convinced. On one visit from England to Germany, Alfred and Hermann receive the last existing book of accurate history from a suicidal knight that completely changes their perspective of the German regime.

In this universe, there is a strict structure of societal rights. At the top of this system is Hitler, of course. Directly below Hitler is his inner circle of Knights. Below them are Knights, those specially selected Germans. Then are pure-blooded Germans, with the subsequent races beneath them. The bottom two rungs of this societal hierarchy are women and Christians. The absolute lowest of the low in this world are Christian women. Christians don't accept Hitler as a god, hence their low status.<sup>26</sup> This corresponds to the view of first-wave feminism. Women were seen as subpar to men, and first-wave feminists fought against that.<sup>27</sup> Although an extreme interpretation, Burdekin is showing how devilish and outright insufferable a universe with women constantly degraded can be, and what direction we are heading if we continue to ignore the rights of women.

Burdekin uses *Swastika Night* as a warning in more than one way. Although she is warning the populace about Hitler and his regime, there is an underlying warning about not embracing feminism. The way women are personified and described in *Swastika Night* is absolutely horrendous. In the first pages of the novel, the reader is forced to sit through a woman's church

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<sup>25</sup> Burdekin, Katharine, and Murray Constantine. *Swastika Night*. Pp 29.

<sup>26</sup> Burdekin, Katharine, and Murray Constantine. *Swastika Night*. Pp 26.

<sup>27</sup> Foley, Barbara.

session from the perspective of the Knight conducting it. Women are seen as disgusting creatures whose only purpose is to bear children.<sup>28</sup> Their hair is shaved, they are skinny, and often naked. Their identities ripped from them, as they are not even worthy of being identified by something as humanizing as a name. Women live in the “women’s quarters” completely separate from men as they “don’t even have souls”.<sup>29</sup> When women give birth, there are two accepted responses. In this society only the births of male children are celebrated, as the birth of a baby girl is seen as a failure.<sup>30</sup> Male children are stripped away from their mothers after they are done breastfeeding. They are raised by the collective of men in Germany. Girls are able to grow up with their mothers until they reach the age of childbearing. Burdekin is commenting on the extreme preference for men in society. First-wave feminism centered on fighting for men and women to be seen as equal humans. In the society in *Swastika Night*, women and men are as far from equal as humanly possible. Women are seen as emotional and worthless creatures, as the humans they create will never live up to the greatness that was Hitler. Burdekin is commenting on the struggle that first wave feminists had in which feminists were never seen in a positive light, they were always struggling for any form of recognition.<sup>31</sup> Although there is no direct women’s liberation movement in the novel, there is a distinct moment in which Hermann and Alfred are learning that Hitler was born of a woman, and the women were once the object of lust and love that stands out as that was impacted by first-wave feminism. In this moment of revelation where Hermann and Alfred realized that women had become creatures because of their treatment, there is an air of guilt and disbelief.<sup>32</sup> First-wave

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28 Burdekin, Katharine, and Murray Constantine. *Swastika Night*. Pp 10.

29 Burdekin, Katharine, and Murray Constantine. *Swastika Night*. Pp 9.

30 Burdekin, Katharine, and Murray Constantine. *Swastika Night*. Pp 14.

31 McGuire, John Thomas. "The Boundaries of Democratic Reform: Social Justice Feminism and Race in the South, 1931-1939." *The Journal of Southern History* 78, no. 4 (2012): 887-912. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23795647>.

32 Burdekin, Katharine, and Murray Constantine. *Swastika Night*. Pp 81.

feminists were constantly battling men for the sheer realization of the oppression of women, but men of the time rarely look intrinsically at their own treatment of women.

A large aspect of *Swastika Night* is a man's right to rape women. Due to the extreme devaluation of women in this society, and the disgust with women in general, men are allowed to rape women whenever they please. The only caveat to this is that it is looked down upon to rape a Christian girl, and the woman must be at least fourteen.<sup>33</sup> This disgusting detail is not incidental, and a commentary on the changing rape laws during first wave feminism.<sup>34</sup> First wave feminism had a huge impact on marital-rape laws and the legal age of consent. During this time period, the concept of a woman being raped by her husband was absolutely absurd, and often seen as impossible. First wave feminism fought to promote women's rights, including the right to her own autonomy. Also, during this time period, there was another push to raise the legal age of consent to 16. There was a lot of pushback to such legislation. There were arguments that the birthrate of the nation would decline to nothingness and that young men would be denied the women they "deserved".<sup>35</sup> Burdekin is showing what could happen if we don't listen to these women, and pass legislation that protects their rights.

*Swastika Night* is disgusting, terrifying, and repulsive - which is what makes it so effective. Burdekin knows that she is pushing these "what-if" scenarios to the extreme, that's the point of them. She aims to show what kind of a slippery slope we as a society are falling towards when we restrict the rights of women. First wave feminism was focused on the autonomy of women and protecting their human rights. *Swastika Night* does a fantastic job of creating a dystopia that no one would want to live in, but that could be seen as a possibility if feminism had

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33 Burdekin, Katharine, and Murray Constantine. *Swastika Night*. Pp 33.

34 Freedman, Estelle B. *Redefining Rape: Sexual Violence in the Era of Suffrage and Segregation*. Place of publication not identified: Harvard Univ Press, 2015.

35 "Statutory Rape Laws in Historical Context" <https://www.sunypress.edu/pdf/60840.pdf> Accessed November 23, 2019.

never occurred.

### **Second-Wave Feminism and The Handmaid's Tale**

Second-wave feminism primarily occurs in the United States from the 1950s through the 1980s. Characterized primarily by health and sexuality revolutions, women began to reclaim sex. First-wave feminism revolved around issues of suffrage and labor equality allowing second-wave feminists to turn to more societal and personable issues. Prior to the 1960s sex was to be between a husband and wife for the purpose of procreation. During second-wave feminism, there was a focus on having sex for pleasure and reclaiming sex. Prior to second-wave feminism pleasurable sex was seen as a masculine experience, reserved solely for men.<sup>36</sup> Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* was revolutionary and discussed how women were not living fulfilled lives in their current roles as housewives.<sup>37</sup> Women during this time period placed a major emphasis on the concept that they were human beings who enjoy sex, not sex objects.

Entangled with sexuality was the evolution of women's health. In the early 1960s, there was a major political and social push to legalize abortion. This spark carried through the following decades culminating in a pro-birth control and pro-choice societal movement.<sup>38</sup> At the height of second-wave feminism *Roe v. Wade* which decided under the 14th amendment's privacy clause, pregnant women had the right to terminate their pregnancy.<sup>39</sup> This sexual revolution was full of active protests, marches, and activism. Women were actively speaking against governmental infrastructure and societal norms that were now being deemed misogynistic, sexist, and antiquated like never before.

The *Handmaid's Tale*, written by Margaret Atwood in 1985 encapsulates

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36 Campbell, Beatrix. "A Feminist Sexual Politics: Now You See It, Now You Don't." *Feminist Review*, no. 5 (1980): 1-18. doi:10.2307/1394695.

37 Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: Norton, 2001.

38 Norsigian, Judy. 2019. "Our Bodies Ourselves and the Women's Health Movement in the United States: Some Reflections." *American Journal of Public Health* 109 (6): 844-46. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2019.305059.

39 "Roe v Wade." OYEZ. Accessed November 23, 2019. <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1971/70-18>.

the ideals of second wave feminism. Set in the near future, *The Handmaid's Tale* explains the story of how Gilead, an extremist Christian group, started a war with the United States government, eventually gaining control of a majority of the east coast. During a major fertility crisis, Gilead's call to return to Christian values became very attractive to wealthy families. Eventually, Gilead was able to create a functioning society in which fertile women are made "Handmaids" who dress in only long red dresses, have their faces covered, and are raped every month by their "commanders" in an attempt to impregnate them. They are forced into this role of "handmaid" based on the Christian bible verse Genesis 30:1-3, in which Rachel, who is unable to have children, tells her husband Jacob to have sex with her handmaid to produce children. These women that are forced into the role of handmaids are considered "traitors" of society for a variety of reasons, all of which can be directly drawn from the ideals within the second wave of feminism.

In Atwood's universe, the women who are forced into this obvious and systematic oppression are the women who were breaking traditional taboos in the cultural expectations of the time. Women involved in affairs, gay women, women using birth control, or other "ungodly" acts were forced into being handmaids.<sup>40</sup> The counterculture movement that accompanied the second wave feminism centered on challenging norms put in place by orthodox Christianity. Sex before marriage, adultery, homosexuality, and birth control are all considered sins in Christianity, which created a negative stigma of such acts in the public sphere. The outrage based on birth control has found roots in *young men* who felt their masculinity was being questioned.<sup>41</sup> Second wave feminism aimed to counter this stigma and to normalize women taking control of their bodies.<sup>42</sup> This stigma was completely challenged by second wave

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40 Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*. Pp 24. New York: Anchor Books, a division of Penguin Random House LLC, 2019.

41 Campbell, Beatrix.

42 Gerhard, Jane F. *Desiring Revolution: Second-Wave Feminism and the Rewriting of American Sexual Thought, 1920 to 1982*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

feminism, and Atwood uses her dystopian novel to comment on the effect of the cultural taboos. Atwood puts these “disgraced” women in bright red uniforms. This color of sin and danger puts these women at the center of attention.<sup>43</sup> In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, one woman’s life as a handmaid, June, is told in first person. By putting these project-women as both the protagonist and main oppressed group, Atwood’s novel is commenting on the systematic oppression prevalent in society at the time of publishing. While this may be an overstatement, she is effectively using satire to explain the drastic nature that such societal views can lead to.

In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, handmaids are objects used for childbearing. Alison Steube said it best when she explained that handmaids are treated like candy wrappers.<sup>44</sup> The children are the candy in this society, and the women simply deliver that precious gift and are tossed aside when their jobs are complete. Handmaids have three chances (six years total) to bear a child for their commanders, or they are sent off to work at labor camps for the rest of their lives.<sup>45</sup> Sexual reproduction played a huge role in second wave feminism. Feminists focused on reclaiming sex as an empowering action instead of solely a means to an end. Second wave feminists aimed to “reproductive experiences were analyzed as sources of power as well as subordination.”<sup>46</sup> In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, only handmaids are permitted to have sex with their commanders. Sex for pleasure is discouraged and even illegal for certain sects of society, which is a commentary on the negative societal view of women who engage in sex for pleasure. Atwood’s disapproval of “slut culture” is evident through the book as the oppressive regime and antagonists are directly working against a woman’s desire for pleasurable sex. The sex that occurs

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43 Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid’s Tale*

44 Ritzenhoff, Karen A., and Janis Goldie. *The Handmaid’s Tale: Teaching Dystopia, Feminism, and Resistance Across Disciplines and Borders*. Pp 137. Lexington Books, 2019.

45 Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid’s Tale* page 53

46 Ginsburg, Faye, and Rayna Rapp. 1991. “The Politics of Reproduction.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 20 (October): 311–43. doi:10.1146/annurev.an.20.100191.001523.



between the handmaids and commanders, called “the ceremony”, is impersonal, awkward, and uncomfortable. Gilead forbids sensual touching, and the commander’s wives hold the handmaids in place while their commander essentially uses their bodies for masturbation. This detail effectively throws a punch at women who are bystanders to the feminist movement. The wives hold the handmaids in place, effectively holding them in their oppression, and Atwood is claiming conservative women do the same. In her *dystopian novel*, Atwood places a heavy emphasis on the lack of love in sex and fertility. June, the protagonist, ends up acting against this, by having a sexual affair with her guard, Nick,<sup>47</sup> and an emotional affair with her commander.<sup>48</sup> Atwood is pushing feminist empowerment with these deliberate actions from June in the sense that she is having sex not only for her pleasure but she is also able to seek the comfort in multiple men in a society that threatens her life for such actions.

Another sect of oppressed women under Gilead are “the Wives” and “the Aunts”. Wives are women who have been deemed infertile and are married to high ranking commanders and officials. Wives are placed in their oppression and roles but have more power than the handmaids they are in charge of. Wives are supposed to put their commanders and potential children above anything else. They are not permitted to speak out of turn, read, or act sexually.<sup>49</sup> Wives hold handmaid's down during “the ceremony”, and stand as a model of purity for the nation. The Aunts are older women in the society who have been given the job of reeducating handmaids. They act as enforcers for the handmaids and seem to take on the role of old-fashioned mothers. The feminists of first wave feminism ultimately were the role models and parental figures in the lives of women leading the second wave of feminism, and there was a sense of judgment onto second wave women for being promiscuous and

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47 Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*. Pp 269.

48 Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*. Pp 154.

49 Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*. Pp 24.

lewd.<sup>50</sup>Atwood personified this pressure from authority figures into the characters of the Aunts. The Aunts throughout the novel discipline the handmaids and treat them like children who have been led astray. The Aunts claim to have the handmaids' best interests in mind as well, despite their constant berating and electrocution techniques via cattle prods.<sup>51</sup>Atwood's comparison of abusive mothers through the Aunts shows the struggle between first and second wave feminists.

June's best friend from college, Moira, is an extremely important character when looking at *The Handmaid's Tale* through a feminist political perspective. Moira is the personification of female rebellion in oppressive societies. Firstly Moira is a lesbian, which is not only outlawed in Gilead but taboo in the United States during the novel's creation.<sup>52</sup> Moira is fiery, and even manages to escape Gilead's government for some time after her placement as a handmaid. She escapes by tricking an Aunt and stealing her clothes.<sup>53</sup> Once Moira is inevitably caught by the government, she is placed as a worker at Jezebel's, an underground prostitution ring. Similar to the allusion of handmaids in the bible, Jezebel has a biblical connection. Jezebel was a fierce woman who married King Ahab. Her cruelty led to the execution of several prophets and made her name synonymous with "wicked woman".<sup>54</sup>Atwood knew what she was doing when she picked "Jezebel" as the name of the strip club, in that she was making a commentary on the destructiveness in hypersexuality. Handmaids are seen to be almost sexless and Jezebels are the epitome of sex appeal, but neither group is happy. Atwood is striking at the concept of a desired middle ground, that women deserve to be sexy but need

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50 Gerhard, Jane F. *Desiring Revolution: Second-Wave Feminism and the Rewriting of American Sexual Thought, 1920 to 1982*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

51 Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*. Pp 32.

52 Campbell, Beatrix.

53 Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*. Pp 243.

54 The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Jezebel." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., July 9, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jezebel-queen-of-Israel>.

not get lost in their sex appeal. Most of the women at Jezabel's are lesbians, creating a commentary on both the taboo nature of lesbians during second wave feminism and their over-sexualization. By definition, lesbians do not pursue sexual relationships with men, meaning sexual acts in their relationships are for pure pleasure, reproduction is biologically impossible. This denial of men and sex for pure pleasure is an epitome of second wave feminism. By Gilead making lesbians prostitutes, with customers that they legally can not say no to, there is a masculine power over them. Gilead is enforcing the concept of male pleasure of women's as the only reason men go to Jezabel's is for underground, taboo, and pleasurable sex. Prostitutes at Jezabel's are sterilized and gay, the only reason they would be sexual in a male and female context is when the man is deciding when sex is going to occur. Prior to second wave feminism, "the feminine sexuality was rendered dependent on masculine resourcefulness"<sup>55</sup> and Moira is there to show that even the feistiest of feminists have the opportunity to be dimmed by oppressive regimes.

Margaret Atwood knew exactly what she was doing when she released her *dystopian* novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*. Nearly every aspect of Gilead's nightmarish government can be drawn to a stigma or taboo present in American society from the 1920s to the 1980s. Second wave feminism is in direct confrontation with the negative portions of our government, similarly to how second wave feminism is so prevalent in rebellious handmaids like Moira. Atwood created a novel that took the conditions that sparked second wave feminism and pushed them to their extremes. She constructed a universe where second wave feminism never occurs and the obtuse and outdated societal views are left to run rampant. By dissecting Atwood's novel it is clear that second wave feminism and the societal conditions before it had a heavy influence on her writing of dystopian universes. Atwood's extreme hyperbole

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<sup>55</sup> Campbell, Beatrix.

on the state of the united states during second wave feminism may be outlandish and uncalled for, but I find it fascinating. Her storytelling makes the novel enjoyable for the larger audience, but the more subtle call outs of society are what make *The Handmaid's Tale* a beautiful commentary on the feminist movement.

### **Third Wave Feminism and *The Hunger Games***

Third-wave feminism started to gain traction in the 1990s and lasted until the early 2010s. This period is characterized by the rapid growth of technology and social media, which in turn characterize the social movements of the period. After the intense social movements that accompanied second and first-wave feminism, third-wave feminism took a more laid back and behind the scenes approach. Centered on inclusivity, third-wave feminism looked to deconstruct the original thoughts of what is or isn't feminism, and called women to define what feminism is for themselves.<sup>56</sup> There tends to be a sort of push back, amongst third-wave feminists, against second and first wavers. Third-wave feminists look to claim themselves as more empowered than first-wave feminists, but not raging "bra-burners" like second-wave feminists. Striking this balance between empowerment and overwhelming activism leads to a more negative public opinion of feminism during this third wave. Women are turned off to feminism being taught directly but are looking to be empowered through more indirect and subtle methods.<sup>57</sup> However, the main takeaway from third-wave feminism is inclusivity. The third wave embraces all forms of women empowerment and acknowledges that they are all valid in their own special way. During this period sex work is a part of feminism, but so is being a stay at home mom. Although this leads to a more internal conflict on the definition of

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56 Snyder, R. Claire. 2008. "What Is Third-Wave Feminism? A New Directions Essay." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 34 (1): 175-96. doi:10.1086/588436.

57 Giffort, Danielle M. "SHOW OR TELL? Feminist Dilemmas and Implicit Feminism at Girls' Rock Camp." *Gender and Society* 25, no. 5 (2011): 569-88. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23044173>.

feminism, ultimately the ability to choose what feels right for each individual is more feminist than being put into a box.<sup>58</sup>

*The Hunger Games*, written by Suzanne Collins in 2008, depicts a dystopia of the United States in the far future. The United States government is long gone, and the government of Panem rules. There is the Capitol which is full of money, fashion, sex, and drugs. Outside of the Capitol are twelve districts. Each year the Capitol makes each district send one boy and one girl between the ages of twelve and eighteen to compete in the annual Hunger Games. The Hunger Games are a televised fight to the death between the twenty-four district tributes. The winner of the Hunger Games becomes showered with fame, riches, and the adoration of all of Panem. Before these children are forced to fight to the death on live television in front of the entire nation, they are escorted to the Capitol to be paraded around. First, the opening ceremony of the games has extreme grandeur and pomp. The tributes ride in on chariots in front of an adoring crowd. The tributes are put through survival training and then scored on their likelihood of surviving the Games. They are then interviewed on national television. In between these events, the tributes are treated to all of the parties, drugs, and food they desire. Throughout this entire process, the rich residents of the Capitol have the opportunity to bet on what tribute will win the games. In district twelve, where the protagonist Katniss resides, people are the poorest of the poor. They historically are unable to win the Hunger Games as they are very poor and therefore malnourished. Being selected as the tribute is practically a death sentence. Katniss, however, hunts for her family as her father, the main breadwinner in the family, died several years ago. Then Primrose, Katniss's little sister, is selected for the games. Katniss heroically volunteers for her sister and enters into the games.

Collins uses Katniss as a commentary on the box that women seem to be

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58 Snyder-Hall, R. Claire. "Third-Wave Feminism and the Defense of "Choice"." *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no. 1 (2010): 255-61.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25698533>.

forced into Third wave feminism speaks out against the kind of restrictions that previous waves of feminism seemed to put on women.<sup>59</sup> Katniss is described from the start as a relatively masculine woman who has matured extremely fast due to her living conditions. Katniss is straightforward and doesn't handle pleasantries very well.<sup>60</sup> This inability to partake in small talk is quite a problem for Katniss's new situation. When tributes are able to charm the public, they receive public support. This public support translates into perhaps lifesaving gifts during the Hunger Games. This need to charm the public to survive is a brilliant commentary on the societal expectations of women. Women are seen as needing to be beautiful, kind, and charming at all turns to be viewed positively - even when their life is on the line.<sup>61</sup> When Katniss is whisked away to the Capitol she is first completely made over to be "more appealing".<sup>62</sup> Throughout the entire pre-games events, Katniss is constantly told to act more feminine, going as far as to catch roses and blow kisses to fans in order to garner their support.<sup>63</sup> Although Katniss is extremely talented with her hunting abilities, thus making her an ideal candidate to be competitive in the games, she continues to have to prove her feminine side to prove her worth. Collins is commenting here on the strenuous and unnecessary hoops women must jump through to prove their worth. The men during the games must act pleasant, however, women are held to a different standard. This difference is the key item Collins is commenting on, and making a point that women should not have to prove their womanhood. Third wave feminism focused on the inclusion of all types of women, no matter how feminine or masculine they are naturally.<sup>64</sup> What I enjoy about *The Hunger Games* especially, is that this issue is never fully addressed, even in the continued

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59 Snyder, R. Claire.

60 Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. Pp 69. New York: Scholastic Press, 2008.

61 Anthony, Amanda, Sarah Okorie, and Lauren Norman. 2016. "When Beauty Brings Out the Beast: Female Comparisons and the Feminine Rivalry." *Gender Issues* 33 (4): 311-34. doi:10.1007/s12147-016-9158-5.

62 Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. Pp 62.

63 Hentges, Sarah. *Girls on Fire: Transformative Heroines in Young Adult Dystopian Literature*. Pp. 11. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., Publishers, 2018.

64 Snyder, R. Claire. 2008. "What Is Third-Wave Feminism? A New Directions Essay."

trilogy. Collins acknowledges that this is such an issue in the society that it is not fixed when Katniss survives the games, she still must put on a facade in order to be taken seriously.

There is also a commentary on the world of reality television and social media to be had. Although the games are televised twenty-four hours a day seven days a week until all but one tribute is dead - the true commentary comes in the events before the games even begin. Each tribute is assigned their own stylist from the start.<sup>65</sup> The tributes are dressed in beautiful gowns and practically made into puppets for the Capitol to enjoy. Third wave feminism is historically characterized by the rise of reality television and social media.<sup>66</sup> The way that the tributes are made into character archetypes, despite their personalities that are shown away from the staged events, reinforces the concept that Collins is showing how damaging a society that forces individuals into certain roles is. Especially during the interview portion, the tributes try their best to portray a personality that the residents of the capitol would love. Some tributes try to be sexy, some try to be strong, and some try to be loving - but regardless it is made clear that they are all an act.<sup>67</sup> Collins's way of having children dance like monkeys in a desperate attempt to garner support that could save their life is the epitome of dystopic. Her expert way of making readers uncomfortable fantastically can be drawn to the values of third wave feminism.

Katniss is forced into a relationship for cameras in order to survive. Peeta, the other district twelve tribute, announced his undying love for Katniss during his interview.<sup>68</sup> Katniss, rightfully, is extremely insulted by this but is talked into going along with the act by her advisors. This fake love follows the two tributes throughout the entire games. At the end of the games it is only Peeta and Katniss left alive. In order to play the "star crossed lover"s theme, the two decide to eat

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65 Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. Pp 49.

66 Snyder-Hall, R. Claire. "Third-Wave Feminism and the Defense of "Choice".

67 Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. Pp 124.

68 Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. Pp 128.

poisonous berries at the same time so that there would be no winner.<sup>69</sup> The Capitol decided to save both of them, and thus Katniss's life was saved by a relationship that she did not want to be in. Collins uses this forced stage relationship to show that even though Katniss was a strong and capable woman on her own, the world she was forced into created the circumstances where she needed a relationship to survive. Third wave feminism focuses on the independence of women from men, and the concept that in order to *save her own life* Katniss must pretend to be in love shows the downside of romanticism that feminism is trying to fracture.

Although the Hunger Games does not speak exactly to the third wave feminism movement, the inherent structure, and occurrences in the world of Panem are very in line with feminist ideals. In fact, the subtlety of feminism within the Hunger Games is directly tied to third wave feminism. During this period feminism fell back on the public stage, therefore the politics in much of the literature at the time was inherently subdued.<sup>70</sup> Collins expertly uses Katniss as an example of what women in the public eye of society are put into. Women are forced into roles in order to survive, and feminism is about embracing who you are as an individual. Thanks to Collins, millions of young girls were able to experience how wrong this is as a society, and inherently were introduced to feminism at an early age.

## **Conclusion**

Kathrine Burdekin, Margaret Atwood, and Suzanne Collins all create dystopias that terrify and disgust readers, while simultaneously forcing them to confront the flaws within their societies. By exploiting the flaws of the period, audiences come face to face with the consequences of ignoring feminism. First-wave feminism and Kathrine Burdekin successfully showed the importance

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<sup>69</sup> Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. Pp 345.

<sup>70</sup> Giffort, Danielle M.



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of treating women as autonomous equals to men. Margaret Atwood and other second-wave feminists demonstrate the detrimental effects of restricting a woman's sexuality. Suzanne Collins, Katniss, and the underground third wave covertly taught millions about the dangers of societal expectations in reality television and social media.. Feminist dystopias successfully perpetuate political philosophies through engaging fictional novels. As feminism continues to develop, and new waves are created, feminist dystopias will bring new warnings for their audiences and beg their society to continue to listen.

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## **“An Ethical Enigma: Societal Implications of Futuristic Healthcare”**

**Emma Baughman**

Science-fiction, though perhaps best known for robotic characters, time travel, or killer aliens, also tends to examine contemporary social issues. Many stories of the science-fiction genre extrapolate the technological, ecological, and political issues of modern-day to a futuristic society. *Elysium*, a film riddled with social commentary on the modern healthcare system, is no exception to this trend. The film features advanced medical technology in an elite society called “Elysium” that is misused by the rich and powerful. Such willful abuse of futuristic technology creates a dystopian society riddled with economic inequality. An examination of the scientific plausibility of technology in *Elysium* proves significant by the evident ethical implications of such technology in the film.

*Elysium*, written and directed by Neill Blomkamp, was released in 2013. Before the film even begins, a message appears on screen. It reads, “In the late 21st century Earth was diseased, polluted and vastly overpopulated. Earth’s wealthiest inhabitants fled the planet to preserve their way of life” (*Elysium*). The film follows Max, played by Matt Damon, as he navigates a society in which humans either live on the affluent space station, called Elysium, or on an overpopulated, poverty-stricken Earth in the year 2154. In the film, Los Angeles has been ravaged by horrific pollution and is filled with millions of devastated citizens who vie for very limited resources. To escape such treacherous conditions on Earth, upper-class citizens construct Elysium and enjoy an arguably utopian existence. Citizens of Elysium have unimaginable medical technology among other innovations but deny citizens of Earth access to any of it. When Max develops fatal radiation poisoning from an accident at work, which was perpetrated by dangerous working conditions, he embarks on a journey to Elysium to receive first-class healthcare.

Max's only chance at survival is obtaining access to a device called "Med-Bay," which is plentiful only on Elysium. They are similar in appearance to a computed tomography (CT) scan, or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machine. Med-Bay machines automatically scan patients for any diseases or conditions and instantly cures the body of any ailment. Throughout the film, Med-Bay machines cure leukemia, mend broken legs, and even conduct facial reconstruction in a matter of seconds. Unfortunately for Max, patients must be tattooed with a barcode to prove citizenship in Elysium to use Med-Bay machines, which makes his endeavor far more complicated. *Elysium* is where "space-age medical devices meet social commentary on the healthcare sector." ("Medtech at the Movies"). Audiences are presented with a horrifically unequal society that is perpetuated by futuristic innovations capable of making the elite immortal while the people of Earth fight to survive.

The medical technology found on Elysium seems beyond the reach of human creation, and by modern scientific standards, Med-Bay machines are not replicable on today's Earth. However, aspects of the Elysian healthcare system and Med-Bay machines are actually more plausible than one might think. For instance, patient barcodes are actually on the horizon in the United Kingdom. During his time as England's National Director of Patients and Information, Tim Kelsey introduced a plan to implement barcodes in hospitals. "In addition, patients, pieces of medical equipment, and drugs will be identified using barcodes for the first time. This, it is claimed, will help to ensure that the patient will be given the right drug, at the right dose, and at the right time." (Wright). Connecting medical devices to a digitally enabled patient identification system is a reasonable development in healthcare systems around the globe and is well within our grasp. Though linking these barcodes to citizenship has not been mentioned, it will most likely be indicated as it is linked to the identity of each patient. Whether or not the patient will be denied healthcare based on citizenship is a different issue that must be broached before these barcodes are implemented.

Blomkamp does not attempt to scientifically explain how Med-Bay operates in the film. However, audiences can reasonably assume Med-Bay machines are the result of advances in nanotechnology that have not yet been attained in the real world. According to findings from the National Nanotechnology Initiative, “nanoscience and nanotechnology involve the ability to control individual atoms and molecules. Everything on Earth is made up of atoms-- the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the buildings and houses we live in, and our own bodies.” (“What is Nanotechnology?”). Developments in nanotechnology have allowed scientists to “take advantage of enhanced properties such as higher strength, lighter weight, increased control of light spectrum, and greater chemical reactivity” (“What is Nanotechnology?”). Given the possibility of manipulating the human body at the atomic level, nanotechnology has the potential to transform the field of medicine. The rebuilding of Kruger’s face after coming in contact with a grenade suggests an advanced form of molecular nanotechnology brought about by progress in this field. In the real world, facial reconstruction surgery can repair function and appearance, but it cannot rebuild someone’s face as seamlessly nor as quickly as Med-Bay. Plastic surgeons use tissue from the patient’s body with a microvascular free tissue transfer to reconstruct facial features. Doctors also use implants or prosthetic devices to restore contour to the face (“Facial Reconstruction”). Nanotechnology is an emerging field of science and medicine that is highly funded and it is inevitable that doctors will make strides to improve patient care.

Another futuristic component of Med-Bay machines is the ability to scan the patient’s body and diagnose any ailment without a healthcare professional. The machine can operate independently. This is vastly different than the type of care patients receive in today’s mainstream healthcare system. Patients must visit a physician or specialist to receive a proper diagnosis and treatment. Though consulting a doctor when sick has been custom for thousands of years, today’s technology suggests that a machine similar to Med-Bay is not as outlandish as it seems. Colleen Smith writes, “In November of 2012, Scanadu, an up-and-coming



medical device company... introduced the world to the Scout. The Scout is a “hockey puck-shaped device” that Sanadu says is capable of measuring a multitude of vital signs, including temperature, heart rate, respiratory rate, and oxygen levels in the blood.” (209). Scout technology cannot diagnose the user, but it has the potential to transform the way the general public engages in the healthcare system. Smith continues, “To use the Scout, a consumer simply places the Scout to her temple for ten seconds. The Scout collects and sends the measurements to the consumer’s cell phone via Bluetooth LE, and the information is analyzed and tracked through a companion smartphone application.” (209-210). Similar to Med-Bay machines, Scout technology can measure and record a patient’s vital signs from the comfort of their own home, rendering healthcare facilities unnecessary in this case. Though this technology is still in its testing phase and not yet normalized, current medical machinery is moving in a direction that is reminiscent of science fiction.

Modern breakthroughs in the field of genome editing also suggest the possibility of medical treatment akin to Med-Bay. According to the U.S. National Library of Medicine, “Genome editing (also called gene editing) is a group of technologies that give scientists the ability to modify an organism’s DNA. These technologies allow genetic material to be added, removed, or altered at particular locations in the genome.” (“What Are Genome Editing and CRISPR-Cas9?”). A prominent approach to genome editing is CRISPR-Cas9, which is short for “clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats.” This system is faster, cheaper, more accurate, and more efficient than other existing genome editing methods (“What Are Genome”). CRISPR-Cas9 was adapted from a naturally occurring genome editing system in bacteria. The US National Library of Medicine states:

The bacteria capture snippets of DNA from invading viruses and use them to create DNA segments known as CRISPR-arrays. The CRISPR arrays allow the bacteria to “remember” the viruses (or closely related ones). If the viruses

attack again, the bacteria produce RNA segments from the CRISPR arrays to target the viruses' DNA. The bacteria then use Cas9 or a similar enzyme to cut the DNA apart, which disables the virus (“What Are Genome”).

In the lab, CRISPR technology operates similarly. Researchers craft a small piece of ribonucleic acid (RNA) and a “guide” sequence that binds to a specific target sequence of DNA in a genome. Accordingly, “the modified RNA is used to recognize the DNA sequence, and the Cas9 enzyme cuts the DNA at the targeted location.” (“What Are Genome”). This cutting of DNA allows researchers to implement the cell's own DNA repair machinery to add or delete pieces of genetic material. Through this procedure, scientists can make changes to the DNA by replacing a naturally existing segment with a customized DNA sequence.

Additionally, genome editing is of great interest in preventing and developing treatments of disease in the human body. Scientists have still not determined whether CRISPR technology is safe to use in people as it is still in its infancy, so the majority of research comes from cell and animal models. CRISPR is being explored in research on an array of various diseases, like cystic fibrosis, hemophilia and sickle cell disease (“What Are Genomes”). Scientists also project that CRISPR will be pivotal in the future prevention and treatment of complex diseases, such as cancer, heart disease, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection, and even some mental illnesses (“What Are Genomes”).

Even one single error in a sequence of six-billion natural proteins can be fatal. In sickle cell disease, for example, one adenosine protein on the DNA double helix is mistakenly converted to thymine. This discrepancy creates hemoglobin, which is the protein in red blood cells that delivers oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body (Shwartz). In sickle-cell disease, “the damaged gene produces stiff, sticky red blood cells that collapse into a sickle shape after delivering oxygen. The sickled cells often clump together, causing excruciating pain and blocking the flow of oxygen-rich, normal red blood cells to vital organs.” (Shwartz). Because CRISPR allows scientists to target, delete, and repair any mutated sequence of DNA, it is

emerging as an incredibly promising future treatment to not only sickle cell disease, but many others as well.

Given the fact that CRISPR continues to develop rapidly, leading to daily discoveries, an ethical examination of its implications must occur promptly so that this technology does not get out of hand. Editing human embryos to repair genes, even if only to cure disease, is controversial. Though it is fallacious to claim the CRISPR is a “slippery slope,” the ethical implications of this technology must still be considered seriously. For instance, it is a very real possibility that CRISPR could target and remove the wrong gene, which would have horrendous consequences for the embryo. The effects of an incorrectly altered gene could also be passed generationally. To combat this fear, and increase public support for their clinical trials, scientists limit genome editing to somatic cells. Somatic cells refer to any cell other than egg and sperm cells (“What Are Genome”). Avoiding the manipulation of somatic cells would ensure that these changes would only affect certain tissues that will not be passed to future generations.

Additionally, there is much debate regarding whether or not it is ethical to use CRISPR technology to enhance normal human traits, like height or intelligence. Critics of genome editing fear the misuse of CRISPR to create “designer babies.” Various ethical issues arise from this notion. Hank Greely, a bioethicist at Stanford University, warns that CRISPR can enable people with bad intentions to inflict harm on society (Shwartz). Notably, CRISPR would make the creation of something akin to a master race scientifically plausible and readily available. This idea reminds me of Adolf Hitler’s horrific ethnic cleansing and attempted creation of a master race. Society should be highly skeptical of something that is reminiscent of such atrocity. Greely continues, “Smallpox has been eradicated in the wild... But if you want to make a biological weapon, you can use CRISPR to turn ordinary cowpox virus into

smallpox.” (Shwartz). These concerns have made editing embryos and germline cells<sup>71</sup> illegal in most countries.

Though CRISPR has the potential to inflict massive societal destruction, I do not argue that such technology should not be pursued. A cost-benefit analysis of CRISPR technology reveals that it has the propensity to bring immense good into society. This innovation has the capacity to eradicate dreadful diseases, which would relieve millions of people of pain and save human lives. Further, given that CRISPR technology is less expensive than other methods of genome editing, this type of medical care would be more accessible to many people. It is evident that the normalization of CRISPR in today’s healthcare system would lead to a healthier and happier society. However, ethicists and doctors alike must deeply consider the possible unintended consequences that may arise from this technique. Ethical implications of CRISPR must be taken into account when the clinical policies of the procedure are developed to ensure that CRISPR is not abused.

Though the science behind Med-Bay was not made evident in the film, audiences can draw parallels between the machines and CRISPR technology. Both innovations have immense power to cure sick patients of their physical afflictions. Though there is no apparent limit to what Med-Bay machines can cure in the film, scientists speculate that CRISPR will be capable of healing illnesses that have been considered incurable, like various forms of cancer. Both contain incredible restorative powers in the field of medicine. Additionally, both CRISPR and Med-Bay machines treat illnesses quickly. Med-Bay machines locate, diagnose, and treat ailments in a matter of seconds, and scientists boast CRISPR’s unprecedented speed frequently. Both treatments also appear to require only one use. However, because Med-Bay machines are ultimately products of science-fiction, nothing is beyond the capacity of Med-Bay’s healing power. On the other hand, CRISPR, though wildly innovative and futuristic in nature, is still limited to only DNA.

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<sup>71</sup> According to the National Human Genome Institute, a germline cell is a sex cell (eggs or sperm) that are used by sexually reproducing organisms to pass on genes from generation to generation. Other cells in the body are somatic cells (Burgess).

Despite its earthly limitations, CRISPR delivers treatment that is arguably the most similar to that which is provided by Med-Bay machines.

It is no coincidence that Med-Bay machines are driving forces of societal unrest in Elysium given their similarities to CRISPR technology, which as stated, carry significant ethical implications for society. The inaccessibility to quality healthcare is merely a symptom of massive inequality between Earth and Elysium. Leticia C. Simões writes, “While people on Earth live in a chaotic political and economical environment in a zero tolerance policy enforced by the police officers, Elysium residents enjoy access to technology, welfare and security, including the certainty of non invasion of Elysium territory by Earth residents.” (3). Elysium, populated by entrepreneurs, investors, and politicians, is also the hub of politics and decision making for both societies. The powerful elite make all decisions as it pertains to life on Earth, even down to the working conditions in Max’s factory.

The film strongly alludes to the exclusive nature of certain healthcare systems, including that of the United States. In the movie, impoverished families from Earth, especially those who are sick, desperately try to reach Elysium to improve their circumstances and share in their resources. Sadly, Elysium has strict immigration laws, and anyone who tries to enter without authorization is either sent back to Earth or shot out of the sky. The perilous and risky journey to Elysium does not, however, deter people from trying. The most obvious illustration of this is Max’s venture to Elysium. When given five days left to live, Max decides to get an illegal transport to Elysium. As Max does not have enough money to buy a ticket to Elysium, he offers his services to Spider, a coyote and hacker. In exchange for a ticket, Max must obtain the brain data from an Elysian citizen, which would give Spider access to valuable classified information. In exchange for life-saving healthcare, Max places himself in grave danger, loses friends, and even sacrifices his own bodily autonomy. His social status is responsible for the deterioration of his physical health and also deprives him of the quality healthcare that could save his life all at the same time.

One possible analysis of the film would suggest that there is nothing inherently wrong with developing the perfect utopian medical device that instantly heals its patient. The problem does not lie within the machine itself, but with the inaccessibility of advanced technology to all people. Though perhaps an oversimplified illustration, there is nothing wrong with developing a treatment for cancer. In fact, this treatment should be revered by all as it is a tool that is capable of helping many people. However, if this treatment is not shared simply because of a patient's socioeconomic status, an issue emerges. In *Elysium*, Med-Bay is ultimately a piece of metal, and it is not reasonable to blame a piece of metal for systemic inequality. However, the machines symbolize a societal power imbalance that damages the lives of millions of people. Restricting access to lifesaving technology fuels a vicious cycle of poverty and oppression. Similarly, though CRISPR has its ethical faults, there is nothing inherently wrong with curing patients of genetic illnesses, like sickle cell disease for example. Therein lies a larger point of contention if CRISPR is only made available to a privileged few.

As such, *Elysium* and other works of science-fiction prove to be pedagogical tools that shed light on real-world societal issues. Science-fiction stories turn the conventional academic way of exposing certain subjects to a more entertaining medium. Instead of reading about systemic inequality rooted in unequal access to healthcare in a political article, science-fiction films depict it on screen. Both, essentially, tell the same information and portray the same themes. Science-fiction has a way of promoting deeper considerations of society, encouraging debate and discussion, but in the context of the real world. Audiences learn about the society in which they live without even realizing it.

In this way, it is reasonable to assume that the film is allegorical of the failures of the healthcare system in the United States. The United States is deeply rooted in Capitalism, which is largely apparent in its healthcare system. The majority of healthcare facilities in the United States are owned and operated by the private business sector. The cost of medical treatment is astronomically high, so it

is not surprising that most cases of bankruptcy are caused by medical bills or other unexpected major expenses (Krulic). Obtaining medical treatment is virtually impossible without health insurance, which is generally granted by one's employer. In other words, if one does not have a job, one likely does not have health insurance. The current COVID-19 outbreak, which has resulted in the loss of millions of American jobs, has made apparent the problems associated with health insurance coming from one's employer. It feeds into a societal cycle of robbing those in poverty of access to healthcare. *Elysium* blatantly illustrates the dangers of such unequal access and warns audiences not to carry this inaccessibility to the extent of Elysium Med-Bay machines.

Ultimately, Blomkamp's *Elysium* delivers overt social commentary on the dangers of the inaccessibility of healthcare in the real world. Though a world filled with such striking inequality seems far off given the dystopian nature of the film, advances in medical technology shows that it is not as far off as audiences would hope. Technological discoveries in the field of medicine are made every day. Though Med-Bay machines are found only in utopia, scientists continue to make strides and bring what was once thought impossible to fruition. The exceptional and seemingly limitless healthcare on *Elysium* makes for a healthy and prosperous community. This is, once again, commendable and should be celebrated as there is nothing inherently wrong with an innovation whose only purpose is to heal the sick. As such, it is not reasonable to argue that chemotherapy, for instance, should not exist as a treatment for cancer even if it is not made accessible to all cancer patients. Chemotherapy in and of itself is not the problem. The film reminds viewers that this technology is detrimental to the world at large if it is not made accessible to everyone. Withholding medical care from people of different citizenship, or people with low socioeconomic status enables and enforces horrendous societal inequality, which is not to be emulated in the real world. With technology like Scout and CRISPR on the horizon, politicians and doctors must heed the warnings of this film.

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## **“What Are Moral Intuitions?: Good, God, Gut, and Getting There”**

**Em Swain**

Moral Intuitions are familiar to everyone. At the playground, “Would You Rather” takes a turn for the dark among third graders, and some friends decide they do not want to play anymore, because all of the options do not sit right with them. Not long after, in Philosophy 101, the trolley problem is written on the board, and a class of freshmen are confronted with the same uncomfortable feeling at the options. Yet, more often than not, at least one person will make the choice. Uncomfortable as it is, something deep inside one student or another *knows* that one thing is wrong, or that it is the greater of the two evils, and they chose to avoid it. Commonly, and in this paper, moral intuition may be referred to as Conscience or as a moral compass. These all better explain what it means to have one’s moral intuition in good working order. It is something developed over time, although humans are naturally endowed with the capacity for a moral compass, just as they are endowed with the capacity to understand causation.

Moral intuition is best known for the emotive response it creates when in use. It is familiar and applicable, even to those who have not formally heard this term before. It is also, beyond being that gut reaction, viewed as a post-decision evaluator for the self. “Through our individual conscience, we become aware of our deeply held moral principles, we are motivated to act upon them, and we assess our character, our behavior and ultimately our self against those principles.”<sup>72</sup> Traditionally, the concept of conscience is defined as “moral knowledge... that is shared with oneself.”<sup>73</sup> Here, moral knowledge is information that is “bestowed” by the moral intuition. Traditionally, moral knowledge is related to moral absolutes or well-defined moral principles that people often simply cannot put into words. It

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<sup>72</sup> Alberto Giubilini, “Conscience” (Stanford University, March 14, 2016).

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

indicates that there is some greater moral code being dictated by moral intuitions throughout the world.

Being shared with oneself, in the aforementioned sense, does not exclude the possibility that it has been granted to oneself from an external source. So, throughout history, the origin of the moral intuition has been attributed to many different sources. “For example, it might be God, as in the Christian tradition, or the influence of one’s culture or of one’s upbringing... Reference to the self indicates that, from a psychological point of view, conscience involves introspection, awareness of one’s behavior, and self-assessment.”<sup>74</sup> Moral intuition is a vastly complicated and multifaceted tool of personhood and development. In practical application, moral intuition, the conscience, or the moral compass is a gut reaction to moral situations, pointing people toward the good and moral knowledge, and reflecting on past decisions, good or bad. Sometimes when one makes a logical decision using only one of the many theories of ethics (for example, only using consequentialism when considering a violation of rights dilemma), their moral intuition may lead them to reevaluate their logic.

Moral knowledge, one of the key pieces of moral intuition, however, is very difficult to understand. Is it even possible? Some argue that it may not be, as moral knowledge lends itself to universal moral principles. However, it is unclear if there are any universal moral principles, reflecting back on the possibility of moral knowledge. The investigation as to how and if moral knowledge is moral epistemology. Moral epistemology looks at how moral knowledge is developed, if it is possible, and if moral knowledge can be trusted as a point for moral judgement. Moral knowledge would be knowledge that lends itself to humans handling moral conflicts. So, if moral knowledge is possible, it would follow that the moral intuition or moral compass points individuals towards it.

There are many branches and theories to moral epistemology, which include: sociology, psychology, ontologic, evolution, methodology, and feminist moral

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

evaluation, which in gist states that the following theories were made without the female perspective being taken into account, and are therefore untrustworthy as a whole. Sociologically, moral knowledge is either possible but relative to a group's moral sensibilities and thus are reflections of matters of fact, but are not universal. Alternatively, in sociology, moral knowledge may not exist because it would only reflect a difference in moral upbringing between societies and individuals, and would be intrinsically motivated from this perspective. From the psychological perspective, moral intuition might be intrinsically motivated, but judgements of matters of fact can never be intrinsically motivated as they pertain to outside forces; therefore, moral knowledge is impossible. Ontologically, moral intuition and judgement are reflections about moral reality. Moral reality could be tied into the reality of the theological, some other unnatural realm, or it could be part of the world studied by science. From the evolution perspective, moral knowledge is a Darwinian adaptation, or a fact that has become ingrained in humanity since thousands of years ago. Methodologically, some principles can be grasped and understood *a priori* and are independent of natural science, "[however], by understanding moral knowledge as mainly a matter of knowing how to live well interdependently with others by resolving issues collectively as they arise, this methodology may not offer a conception of moral truth appropriate to genuine moral knowledge."<sup>75</sup>

There are many competing theories about moral knowledge, as shown above. The most accurate theory of moral knowledge to present understanding is the evolutionary theory. Moral knowledge reflects the state of moral realities, which relate directly to the Darwinian principles of survival and community. There are many examples worth exploring, but the first is not a formal example, but one presented early in childhood. Imagine Aladdin: he has no food, no reliable shelter, and no formal education. He is too young to have a job. Is it acceptable for him to steal food in order to survive? One may say that, yes, because survival is of the

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<sup>75</sup> Richmond Campbell, "Moral Epistemology" (Stanford University, November 6, 2019).

utmost importance to an individual. Others may say, no, he should have found a way to eat without breaking the rules and robbing the fruit salesman of his own income. Others may point out that Aladdin had no other choice, and that the society as a whole had done Aladdin wrong, by not providing for a homeless child reliably after he lost his parents. All of these are judgements point at Darwinian principles of survival and community; it is wrong to steal because it hurts others in the community, but people tend not to blame someone for doing what it takes to survive, within reason.

What, then, can we consider to be good? Are there not decisions that require reflection on the ultimate good, rather than just Darwin's apes' manners? There are tests to moral intuitions that do help point people in the direction of the "good" which may be defined differently than just regard for the community and regard for self. Often, children are taught that there is an all-good entity in the world, whose likeness should be strived towards. This "good" is in fact often the tie-breaker in moral decision making, and may be highly individualized, or simply very vague.

Philosophers have developed many great tests of the good to which the moral intuition points. None quite as famous as Phillipa Foot's "Trolley Problem." The traditional problem states that a trolley without brakes is speeding down a track that splits in two. It is directed, currently, toward a group of five people who are stuck and will not be able to move out of the way of the trolley. On the other track, there is a singular person, who similarly cannot move. Is it ethically responsible, or is it *good*, to switch the track and save the group, while killing the singular person? This though experiment relates greatly to Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill's idea of Utilitarianism, also called consequentialism. The premise of these ideas is that the "good" is to provide the most utility to the most people. To do so, one must measure the prospective consequences, and see if the good produced is greater than the harm produced. In the trolley problem, a consequentialist would say the easy answer is that only one person needs to die. Foot would be fine with a characterization such as this, but her work was meant to

be used far more widely. She felt that the “Good cannot be to struggle to Victory unless this struggle is connected somehow to something worthwhile, beneficial, or valuable, and not just to an individual but in a general way”<sup>76</sup> Therefore, there must be something deeper to The Good than just how an individual feels about it.

Kant is the opposer to Bentham and Mill, and his ideas utilize Foot’s trolley problem in a much different way. Kantian ideology is also called deontology, derived from the greek word “*deon*” which means “rules.” Deontology holds that there is more than just the most utility to consider when making ethical decisions. Principles such as justice, and consent, and the Golden Rule apply to even decisions like the trolley problem. For example, if the singular person on the second track was a close relative, the person at the lever would have a right to not kill their relative. They have a right to choose to do nothing. It seems a little “original-sin” to phrase it in this way, but consider a different problem: is it ethically responsible to restrict the freedom of movement of someone who has not committed a crime? The restriction of rights is a frequent issue when discussing wrongfully accused individuals or even the abuse of minorities. It seems undeniably true that locking up an entire minority of people because of the actions of some individuals with a similar genealogy is wrong.

So, when making decisions like these, John Rawls combined these two ideas in his own thought experiment: “The Veil of Ignorance.” People tend to think of justice with themselves at the center: that way, justice is “just us.” However, Rawl’s provides a thought experiment that completely reshapes the conception of justice truly means.

No one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does anyone know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength, and the like. I shall even assume that the parties do not

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<sup>76</sup> Stephen P. Schwartz, *A Brief History of Analytic Philosophy: from Russell to Rawls* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 277.

know their conceptions of the good or their special psychological propensities. The principles of justice are chosen behind a veil of ignorance.<sup>77</sup>

Therefore, Rawls points at The Good as being fair, and equally beneficial to the smallest minority as it is to the greatest majority. This does not mean that one cannot make decisions that benefit the majority; it simply means that those people have to evaluate if their possible benefit is worth the possible harm to the person they could have easily been born as instead.

G. E. Moore is diametrically opposed to these definitions of the Good. He holds that the Good is not something definable in the sense of strict identity, but rather that it is a simple attribute, with no larger parts comprising it, but different and more complex entities can have it as part of their identity.

If I am asked ‘what is good?’ my answer is that good is good, and that is the end of the matter. Or if I’m asked ‘how is good to be defined?’ my answer is that it cannot be defined, and that is all I have to say about it. But disappointing as these answers may appear, they are of the very last importance. To readers who are familiar with philosophic terminology I can express their importance by saying that they amount to this: That's propositions about the good are all of them synthetic and never analytic that is plainly no trivial matter. And the same thing may be expressed more popularly by saying that, if I am right, then nobody can foist upon such an axiom as that ‘pleasure is the only good’ or that ‘good is the desired’ on the pretense that this is the very meaning of the word.<sup>78</sup>

Moore states here that the Good is not something that can be defined by things like “the good is the most utility” or “the good is justice” or “the good is fairness.” He

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<sup>77</sup> Andreas Kluth, “The Veil of Ignorance: Great Thought Experiment,” (Hannibal and Me: life lessons from history, 2014).

<sup>78</sup> Aloysius Martinich and David Sosa, *Analytic Philosophy: an Anthology*, 2nd ed. (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 442.

holds that those strict identity statements, made synthetically are simply not all encompassing of what “good” really is. Rather, good is a quality, that some things have and some things do not. Good is a simple predicate, which he compares to the color yellow. However, “unlike yellow, good is not a natural property and cannot be perceived by the senses, but is apprehended by Moral intuition”<sup>79</sup>

Now Moore goes on to say that there are goods that follow other goods. A chain of desires people have, leading them from one good to the next if they follow their own reasoning. Like many before him, Moore does agree that there are things that are good for what they cause along this chain, which ends (or begins) with things that are good for their own sake. In these which are good for their own sake, he includes “personal affection and the appreciation of what is beautiful in Art or Nature.”<sup>80</sup> These two things being so different, it is clear why Moore holds that “Good” cannot be redefined in the sense of strict identity. To do so is to commit the naturalistic fallacy.

The naturalistic fallacy is a fallacy that occurs when one person conflates the meanings of a subject and a modifier in a sentence. For example: if I am eating chocolate flavored ice cream, and say “my ice cream is chocolate,” but take it to mean that my ice cream is not just chocolate flavored, but rather is a type of chocolate itself, such as a truffle or white or dark chocolate, then I have committed the naturalistic fallacy by interpreting the modifier of “chocolate” as the subject. The more correct phrase would be “this ice cream has an attribute which is identifiable with chocolate.” To understand Moore’s more applicable sense of this fallacy, replacing “ice cream” and “chocolate” with moral judgement keywords. “Winning is good. Therefore, The Good is winning.” Now, there is nothing wrong with winning, but to confuse a noun predicate for an adjective predicate can create some very serious issues. Moore uses this to illustrate that “good” is no more than a modifier and cannot be defined by strict definitions as many try to do.

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<sup>79</sup> Stephen P. Schwartz, *A Brief History of Analytic Philosophy: from Russell to Rawls* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 267.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* 268.



Religion has some very serious stake in moral intuition. If one believes in a God, it may be very possible that religion or some theological figure does create and implant moral intuition or conscience. This is a stance held by many theologians. “On many accounts, conscience does not generate its own moral principles. For example, the moral contents we discover within us can be acquired through divine intervention, as is the case with the laws of nature which, according to Christians, God infuses in our heart.”<sup>81</sup> If there is a God or Gods, it seems very likely that it may direct humanity towards the good through moral intuitions, which can appear to come out of nowhere. The gut reactions of moral intuition described initially in this thesis do not appear similar to the labor- and logic- intensive ethical workout that politicians and college students on debate teams engage in regularly. Rather, they appear to occur spontaneously.

The epistemic role of conscience does not necessarily coincide with the role of epistemic faculties or functions such as reason, intuitions, or senses. In particular, that conscience “brings” us moral knowledge or beliefs does not necessarily mean that it gives us direct access to the source of this knowledge or of these beliefs, as might be the case with reason, intuitions, or senses.<sup>82</sup>

The prolific Catholic, Thomas Aquinas held that “conscience is the act of applying universal principles (i.e., divine laws) to real situations.”<sup>83</sup> His predecessor, Augustine similarly wrote about moral intuitions. He wrote that conscience points people in such a way that “the supreme good is sought, the good to which we refer everything that we do, desiring it not for the sake of something else, but for its very own sake.”<sup>84</sup> Augustine held that the conscience pointed people towards happiness in many forms, but that the ultimate happiness was God, who the conscience would

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<sup>81</sup> Alberto Giubilini, “Conscience” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2016).

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Augustinus, *Political Writings* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), 63-4.

eventually point out to an individual; even the Greeks found virtue as The Good, and Christians see virtue as something derived from God.. “Man is happy,” he said, “not by enjoying the body or the mind but by enjoying God...Plato determined that the final good is to live according to virtue and that this is possible only to one who knows and imitates God and that there is no other cause of happiness.”<sup>85</sup>

Another well known philosopher who spoke on the nature of the conscience or moral intuition was Thomas Hobbes, who wrote in the 1600's. Hobbes held that the conscience was what linked man to God and other men, and served as the jury and judge of the individual while on earth. He said that “the conscience is a thousand witnesses. And last of all, men... gave those their opinions also that revered name of conscience, as if they would have it seem unlawful, to change or speak against them; and so pretend to know they are true...”<sup>86</sup> He also was aware that conscience could be corrupted. Consequentialists know well the problem he addresses, the time discounting bias, in which criminals “did it against their consciences, or had been corrupted by reward.”<sup>87</sup> This indicates that Hobbes did not believe that conscience was infallible. “For a man’s conscience, and his judgment is the same thing, and as the judgment, so also the conscience may be erroneous.”<sup>88</sup> Here, he says that human judgement is no different from the conscience, in spite of his belief that the conscience was “where not man, but God reigneth;”<sup>89</sup> He relates conscience to an awareness of the laws, then, particularly those of God, but also those of the government. He believes that the conscience is taught, and the capacity for it is bestowed by God, but that does not mean that it in actuality is perfect.

In the next century, David Hume had a much more secular idea of moral intuition, more in line with that advocated throughout this thesis. He believed that

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* 64.

<sup>86</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, ed. William Molesworth, vol. 3 (Lodon: John Bohn, 1839), 39-40.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* 158.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* 179.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* 194.

moral intuitions were socially advantageous obligations. He held that obligations was an action “that its omission is disapproved by unbiased observers,”<sup>90</sup> and that one could not internally produce an obligation. “Since the necessary condition for a natural obligation of promises cannot be fulfilled, we may conclude that this obligation is instead the product of group invention to serve the interests of society.”<sup>91</sup> Therefore, moral intuitions pointed people toward moral obligations, which are produced by outside forces; and individuals subject to them cannot change them because they are abstract. In addition, “he claims that the sentiments of moral approval and disapproval are caused by some of the operations of sympathy, which is not a feeling but rather a psychological mechanism that enables one person to receive by communication the sentiments of another.”<sup>92</sup> This relates strongly to the present idea of empathy, which is incredibly applicable in more modern interpretations of moral intuition, such as the Darwinian moral knowledge, aforementioned.

Modern science demonstrates that the advancement of humanity, as written by Darwin, can be greatly accredited to human’s hard-wired capacity for empathy. The Vagus nerve and mirror neurons in the brain prove that the ability to relate and empathize is a crucial point of development for higher order mammals. Empathy, or the ability to see someone else and imagine doing what they are doing or feeling what they are feeling, is essential in education.<sup>93</sup> It is stronger among people who trust each other, which indicates from an evolutionary perspective that gentleness is crucial to human development. Empathy and the ability to behave empathetically is considered a socially (and, thus, biologically) valuable asset.

Neurology and psychology are strongly related in terms of the study of empathy, and therefore the study of moral intuition. “On a secular account, the external source of moral knowledge that instills moral principles in us is not God,

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<sup>90</sup> Rachel Cohon, “Hume’s Moral Philosophy” (Stanford University, August 20, 2018).

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Thomas S. May, “Mirror Neurons and Empathy :: CSHL DNA Learning Center” (The Dana Review, May 1, 2006).

but one's own culture or upbringing.... our conscience is the faculty through which the social norms of our culture or the norms of our upbringing are evoked and exert their influence on our moral psychology." This is not to say that there is not moral knowledge, as mentioned previously in this paper. Rather, it is to say that those moral knowledges are very vague, and fairly driven by science, as illustrated by Darwin's moral knowledge focus: community and survival. Throughout the study of morality, and how a moral intuition comes to be, none have had such a recognizable set-up for the development of morality as Lawrence Kohlberg. Kohlberg set up a series of experiments spanning the childhood and upbringing of many young boys. Through different stories, and their reactions, Kohlberg identified three stages of moral development, each with two subsections.

Kohlberg's famous thought experiment is familiar. It is the story of Heinz, who cannot afford the medicine for his dying wife.

Heinz tried desperately to buy some, but the chemist was charging ten times the money it cost to make the drug, and this was much more than the Heinz could afford... He explained to the chemist that his wife was dying and asked if he could have the drug cheaper or pay the rest of the money later. The chemist refused, saying that he had discovered the drug and was going to make money from it. The husband was desperate to save his wife, so later that night he broke into the chemist's and stole the drug.<sup>94</sup>

Kohlberg told this story to children and adolescent boys, and identified three broad categories of development that show people as developing their causal and empathetic reactions to moral dilemmas. The first stage is the "Preconventional" stage. At this level, which tends to be from the age of understanding to usually age nine, there is no "personal code of morality. Instead, our moral code is shaped by the standards of adults and the consequences of following or breaking their rules."<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Saul Mcleod, "Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development," (Simply Psychology, 2013).

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

So, the answer to Heinz's dilemma at that age, is usually dependent on if the child thinks Heinz would get in trouble. Consequentialism, particularly that immediate consequentialism that Augustine critiqued, develops first. Later on, a strict sense of deontology paired with some of that personal consequentialism marks the "Conventional" level, which is identifiable for most adolescents and adults. At that stage, "we begin to internalize the moral standards of valued adult role models. Authority is internalized but not questioned, and reasoning is based on the norms of the group to which the person belongs."<sup>96</sup> The answer there is, "he shouldn't have broken the law." Later in life, the Postconventional stage may or may not develop. At this stage, "Individual judgment is based on self-chosen principles, and moral reasoning is based on individual rights and justice."<sup>97</sup> This stage is signified by a personal and self-defined moral intuition, guided by experience and mindfulness.

This theory of the development of morality shows that the capacity for moral intuition, is directly tied to the capacity to view causation. As people view the world from "causation colored lenses" they also have a correlating ability to make moral choices based on their understanding. A person's moral code is taught up to a certain point, by experience and immediate consequences. (The big question is, "Will I get in trouble?") As they get older, and gain more freedom of action, their moral compass points them in the direction of "I should not break the law. I could get in trouble, and is that worth it for me and those around me?" People become very socially minded. Only after development and lots of experience can people enter the final stages described by Kohlberg, in which an individual has created and sticks to their own individualized moral compass, crafted from experience. At a certain point, but not always, people put on their big-philosopher pants and decide what common element they find in their moral intuitions, and that becomes the adage: either universal principles or social contract and individual rights. Which brings us back to consequentialist and deontological ethical perspectives, described by Kant, Betham, Mill, and Rawls.

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

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Moral intuition, the conscience, or the moral compass is something that human beings have the capacity for at birth. Their empathy is built up over time, and they are shown the world as one that has consequences. As they develop, they learn to find the pieces of the moral puzzle, and eventually devise their own moral code. Everyone is born with a cricket, so to speak, but time and experience and empathy give each individual the letters with which to name it, Jiminy. Those hard-hitting adages of the elderly are the result of a fully developed mind, and a constantly developing moral intuition. So, what is moral intuition? It may be something given by God, or it could be an evolutionary social adaptation. Whatever it is, it is a very quick and emotional, gut reaction based on previous experience and values. It points people towards an individualized Good, but society may make that Good more universal than it is always given credit. Finally, it is something that takes time: a moral intuition is something that you grow, and those around you help you to tend.

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