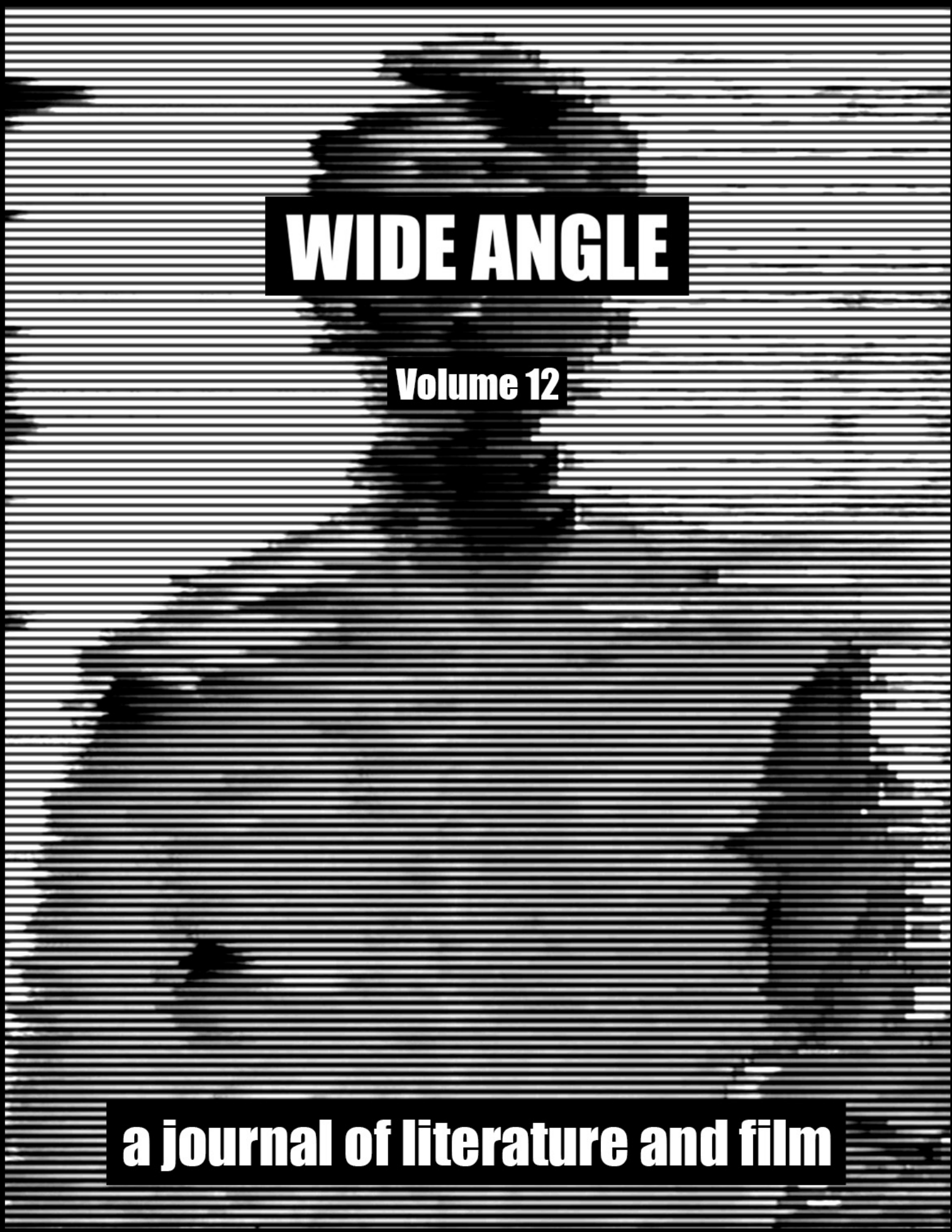

WIDE ANGLE

Volume 12

a journal of literature and film

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Mission Statement

A joint publication between English majors and faculty, the journal embodies the interdisciplinary nature of the Department of English at Samford University. It provides a venue for all Samford students, faculty, and alumni to publish their best critical and creative work.

Literature and film continually reimagine an ever-changing world, and through our research we discover our relationships to those art forms and the cultures they manifest. Publishing one issue per year, *Wide Angle* serves as a conduit for the expression and critique of that imagination. The journal provides a venue for undergraduate research and an opportunity for students to gain experience in editing and publishing. As a wide-angle lens captures a broad field of vision, this journal expands its focus to include critical and creative works, namely academic essays, book and film reviews, and commentaries, as well as original poetry, short fiction and non-fiction, and screenplays. *(Revised, spring 2022)*

Cover Art

"Enjoy the Show"
By Kyle Bowman

Special Topic

This issue features pieces that responded to the call for works on the representation of gender and sexuality in literature and film. Given the timeliness of this topic, we are especially proud to publish these pieces.

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Essay

Sydney Berry

Colonizing Neverland: Mothers of the British Empire in J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*

[Curated from issue 7.2 in spring 2018]

Introduction: The History of British Imperialism and *Peter Pan*

In 1851, inside London's Kensington Gardens, a temple of British power entranced the nations. The Great Exhibition featured artifacts from around the world and drew in crowds from far away at a time when travelling abroad was inaccessible to many. The building, made of glass, was symbolic of the nation and the time in which it was built. Within this temple of British dominance, "nationalism and internationalism were played out to form and define Britain's national identity for years to come" (Van Vugt, n. pag.). Shaping a national identity further developed an overarching sense of elitism in the British popular mindset. Historically, Great Britain had colonized North America, Oceania, and some of Asia, giving rise to the proud phrase, "the sun never sets on the British Empire." From this nationalism grew imperialism, a "rule by a superior power over subordinate territories" (Kumar, n. pag.). Imperialism was enacted through colonization, the formation of territories by a mother country through military conquest, which imposed a Western model of civilization on conquered peoples. This societal ideal grew into a cultural narrative, perpetuated by the Great Exhibition, and was engrained into British citizens at the height of the British Empire during the Victorian Era, taking place throughout the mid-to-late 1800s.

Emerging from the Victorian era, the Edwardian period still held on to many imperialist values established in years prior. For a Scottish playwright, the most effective way to address

these power-hoarding values was through children's literature. J.M. Barrie was born in Scotland nine years after the construction of the Great Exhibition. In 1885, he moved to London, where he was at the epicenter of British pride and imperialism, even if he never visited the Great Exhibition in person (Vaughn, n. pag.). Eventually, before his death in 1937, Barrie would move to Kensington, just outside of Kensington Gardens ("Barrie, J.M.," n. pag.). This same location where the Great Exhibition was housed[1] would later be home to a statue of Barrie's most notable character, Peter Pan. The two attractions of Kensington Gardens are symbolic of a culture that was rapidly changing during Barrie's lifetime. The world's largest monument to colonial power burned down in 1936, while the Peter Pan statue still stands in the heart of the park today. Peter Pan, though certainly a cultural idol of childhood, was originally one Scot's effort to change the narrative of imperialism in Edwardian Britain. J.M. Barrie's 1911 novel *Peter Pan* subtly addresses the subjugation of native peoples and the harmful perspectives of the English Edwardian people through the tension-diffusing medium of children's literature.

Within *Peter Pan's* varying cast of characters, women are influential storytellers that preserve the culture of imperialism and send out the next generation of young men. These women send out white men, namely the Lost Boys, Peter, and the Darling brothers, to colonize the Other, represented by the native tribe of Neverland. These women are redefined as imperial mothers, who are women who tell the story of imperialism to men through their position as caretakers. Acting as imperial mothers, Mrs. Darling and Wendy control the selection of stories that are told in order that men may grow from the savagery of childhood. This savage youthfulness is a state from which the Other never matures, whereas the imperial men transform into proper English gentlemen who will teach the Other the Western model of civilization. Using

[1] The Crystal Palace, the building that housed the Great Exhibition, was moved to greater London in 1854 and subsequently burned down in 1936 (Arnold-Baker, n. pag.).

the same method of storytelling, Barrie counteracts the imperial mothers' narrative by presenting the danger of omitting stories and manipulating the preexisting, true narratives. With his narrative, Barrie shows the harm that this type of storytelling can cause to Others, represented by Tiger Lily and Tinker Bell. By using *Peter Pan* as an extended metaphor for the flawed English imperialist mindset, Barrie employs Wendy's method of storytelling himself to change the colonial narratives impressed upon English children.

Said and Spivak: Assertion of Colonial Editing of Story

The world of *Peter Pan* is characterized by the telling of stories within the larger story. Edward Said in *Orientalism* and Gayatri Spivak in *Nationalism and the Imagination* acknowledge the importance of constructing narratives as an imperial power. The framework of postcolonial theory is founded on the mysteriousness of the Other, as Said explains. However, the Other is ultimately understandable through Spivak's idea of "equivalence," wherein women are the most central cultural storytellers.

Edward Said recognizes the unconscious division that exists between Westerners and Easterners, the former seeing the latter exclusively as an Other. Said argues that, in an effort to define the Orient through Orientalism (the external study of the Orient), Westerners "not only defined but edited it" (167). Attempting to explain what Barrie calls "the puzzling East" (7), Westerners put human complexities into definable terms and edited them into what ultimately became a different truth altogether, creating the flawed Western understanding of the Oriental.

Cultural editing begins with the exploration of "pilgrims," Said's word for those explorers who essentially work as modern crusaders, going to the East not for the East's sake but for some personal reason, either internal growth or external expansion of colonial power. The experience of pilgrims "usually (but not always) resolved itself into the reductionism of the

Orientalistic" (169). The pilgrim's power to tell the Orient's story allows him or her to also manipulate its meaning through reduction of the truth, leading to a simplified understanding of the Other. Said notes in particular English pilgrims who made their pilgrimage to the once-British colony of India: "Already, then, the room available for imaginative play [for the colonized] was limited by the realities of administration, territorial legality, and executive power" (169). Here, "imaginative play" is the freedom to interpret one's own cultural narrative. Through the three mediums mentioned by Said, the "imaginative play" of Easterners is conquered by the overbearing power of the Westerners. The pilgrims thus engage in imperial storytelling, indeed using "imaginative play" as they define, edit, and distort the holistic narrative of Orientals. In short, Westerners, even when living in the context of the East, exert their power over the Other through the selective narratives told.

Gayatri Spivak expounds upon the imagination as an important factor in perpetuating or counteracting nationalism. She argues that, through the neglect of a practice that she calls "equivalence," one's imagination can continue to edit another's culture to a mere reduction of the truth. On the point of equivalence, she is clear: "Here is equivalence. It is not equalization, it is not the removal of difference, it is not cutting down to the familiar. It is perhaps learning to acknowledge that other things can occupy the unique place of the example of my first language" (30). Equivalence is translation without mutation of the cultural nuances that make up another's narrative. While Western equalization would require forsaking a culture previously understood in order to fully grasp another, Spivak's equivalence endeavors to combine cultures and create a "unique place" within the mind of each individual. The idea recognizes that the power of imagination, while often used for perpetuating nationalism, can heal the imperialist mindset.

Imagination historically served as a tool for power, as Said argues, but Spivak further clarifies that the imagination can also be used for restoration in understanding the Other. Spivak states: "Imagination feeds nationalism, and going forward towards the literary imagination . . . [it] go[es] beyond the self-identity of nationalism towards the complex textuality of the international" (20). According to Spivak, studying the literary has the potential to turn the nationalistic imagination away from itself and into empathy for the international. While many novels from the Victorian era perpetuated the imperialist narrative, others, like *Peter Pan*, can point out where the narrative fails and act as literary agents of change. As displayed in *Peter Pan*, self-preserving, nationalistic storytelling acts as an assertive power over Neverland natives, but there is an undercurrent of hope in the metanarrative as the audience understands the danger of enacting the narrative.

Within the world of the novel, imperial power relies on the proselytization of the next generation of colonizers by the cultural storytellers: women. Spivak comments on the necessity of women in colonization narratives: "The role of women, through their placing in the reproductive heteronormativity that supports nationalisms, is of great significance in this general temporizing narrative . . . we [as children] can think ourselves into the falling-due of the future by way of it" (41). Because of their familial positioning near their young, mothers wittingly or unwittingly instill the imperial narrative into the minds of their children, who will think and act in accordance with it as the next generation of potential settlers. Through his female characters, Barrie frames the imperial narrative within the larger story of the novel, enacting Spivak's theory that fiction is a cure for nationalism.

Childhood in the Tension of Savagery and Innocence

Barrie establishes the need for instruction in the imperial narrative by setting up a sharp divide between child and adult, in which the child represents savage tendencies, and the adult represents civilization by Western standards. The entirety of the plot of *Peter Pan* is based in viewing the Darling children and the Lost Boys enacting "adulthood" in Neverland as an example of the Other. In forming such a dichotomy, Barrie reemphasizes the need for children to be trained in the imperialist narrative so that the empire will have generations of colonists to live out their mission in order to indoctrinate the Other.

The main recipients of imperial storytelling in the novel are Peter, the Lost Boys, and the Darling brothers. Repeatedly, these young boys are described in terms of infancy and youth that highlight their incivility and thus their need for imperialism within the text. Peter and the Lost Boys are "coded as child-like and only faintly tinged with a sweet, fey wildness that hints at the romanticism of childhood innocence during the Victorian era" (Kim 27). Playing on the idolization of youth in the Edwardian era, Barrie uses Peter and the other children as recognizable characters of the Victorian childhood. Juxtaposed with the "sweet . . . wildness" of childhood and the boys' savage tendencies, their Otherness would be seen as a threat to the narrative of the British Empire.

From his first appearance, Peter displays how dramatic the distinction between child and adult really is: "When he saw [Mrs. Darling] was a grown up, he gnashed the little pearls at her" (Barrie 15). Peter's hostility toward adults is immediate. The action of gnashing his teeth at her is barbaric, though it is not with sharp, adult, or even animal teeth that he does so. Peter "had all his first teeth" (Barrie 15). The image of baby teeth juxtaposed with the savage action of gnashing at an adult accentuates Peter's distinction as a child in need of the imperialist narrative.

The Lost Boys, like Peter, are explicitly aligned with savagery towards the beginning of the novel. The group voluntarily identifies with the Neverland natives in a session of imaginative play: "'I'm a redskin to-day; what are you, Tootles?' And Tootles answered, 'Redskin; what are you, Nibs?' and Nibs said, 'Redskin; what are you, Twin?' and so on; and they were all redskin" (Barrie 73). This activity is natural for the Lost Boys; they never align with any other people group in Neverland. In fact, their image is so important that "they are forbidden by Peter to look in the least like him, and they wear the skins of bears slain by themselves, in which they are so round and furry that when they fall they roll" (Barrie 49-50). Animal skins are another image that emphasize the boys' barbarity. Into their midst, Wendy and her brothers come, the former coming with the narrative of imperial civilization.

Wendy's own brothers are still in need of the same narrative as part of the next generation of white English settlers. Even though they have received some training from Mrs. Darling, they are still children and need the influence of the imperial. John and Michael have interests that lead toward the savage at the beginning of their time in Neverland. In the Victorian-Edwardian context, such an obsession "is no surprise then, that during this same period of real imperial expansion, there would be a boyhood fascination for savage 'natives,' pirates, and lush, uncharted territories yet to be explored (along with the implicit suggestion that these places have yet to be conquered and 'civilized') that would find its expression in *Peter Pan*" (Kim 48).[2] What may merely seem to be "a boyhood fascination" for the exotic is actually an orientation of childhood with the savage. While Wendy has overcome these tendencies with her feminine childhood and with time, John and Michael learn the proper narrative for Englanders throughout the course of the novel.

[2] Other novels also highlighted this fascination, such as Robert Louis Stevenson's 1882 novel *Treasure Island* and Rudyard Kipling's 1894 novel *The Jungle Book*.

For the Darling brothers, the obsession with the native Neverland inhabitants is inherent and natural. John has a pre-experiential knowledge of the native culture: "I'll tell you by the way the smoke curls whether [the natives] are on the war-path" (Barrie 42). Michael, on the other hand, imagines a Neverland where he will live "in a wigwam" before meeting Peter Pan (Barrie 12). Whereas Wendy's ideas about Neverland focus more on Peter and living on the island, her brothers' interests are centered on the natives, affiliating them with the Other. Because the Darling brothers, the Lost Boys, and Peter are still children, the adults of society that have already been endowed with the imperialist message must impart it to them.

Women's Narrative Construction Defining the Power of Colonization

In a cast of characters that is almost entirely male, Barrie places a lot of importance on women in *Peter Pan.* Within this cast of women, Barrie emphasizes the significance of mothers even further. In the opening moments of the novel, he briefly mentions Peter and Wendy, and then moves on to a page-long description of Mrs. Darling (Barrie 7). Mrs. Darling is the only true mother in the story; however, other characters, mainly the Lost Boys, redefine the term "mother." Instead of simply being a woman who has children, the imperial mother is a woman who is still a caretaker but is primarily the teller of stories. Women must become these narrative definers because, as Bradley Deane notes, in the shift towards Victorian imperialism, "the individual male was no longer the privileged reader of his own story," but was instead the reader of the Other's story; thus, the imperial mother becomes a necessity (702). Among the four main women characters, Mrs. Darling, Wendy, Tinker Bell, and Tiger Lily, it is only the two Englishwomen, Mrs. Darling and Wendy, who succeed in being considered "mothers."

Peter, prior to meeting Wendy, makes numerous visits to the Darlings' household in order to hear Mrs. Darling's stories. In the nursery, Peter admits to Wendy that he does not

"know any stories. None of the lost boys know any stories" (Barrie 31). Gayatri Spivak's concept of the mother as the essential cultural storyteller is demonstrated as Barrie reinforces the societal need for mothers in a foreign land. Wendy ultimately goes with Peter to reshape the narratives of the Lost Boys, resulting in their eventual rule over the natives. Wendy gains this power from Mrs. Darling, drawing attention to the narrative of colonial power as it moves through the generations.

Mrs. Darling is, above the other women in the novel, an exemplar of the imperial mother. Her daughter is able to carry on the imperialist ideals to the Lost Boys, and her sons go on the adventure of settlement to Neverland. Her most central moment as an imperial mother is at the beginning of the novel, wherein she, in singing her children to sleep, "was tidying up her children's minds. It is the nightly custom of every good mother after her children are asleep to rummage in their minds and put things straight for next morning" (Barrie 10). Though ambiguous, this metaphorical action of sorting thoughts is done by telling the children stories as they go to sleep, essentially changing their individual stories, thus changing the narrative of their thoughts about the world.

While the specifics of how Mrs. Darling goes about sorting thoughts are not presented, Barrie does assign specific language to her actions as she sings her children to sleep. Later in the aforementioned scene, Mrs. Darling finds "things she could not understand, and of these quite the most perplexing was the word Peter. She knew of no Peter, and yet he was here and there in John and Michael's minds, while Wendy's began to be scrawled all over with him. The name stood out in bolder letters than any of the other words" (Barrie 12). The descriptors of Mrs. Darling's procedure are based in editing and writing. Instead of identifying Peter as a name or a person, Mrs. Darling does not recognize "the word Peter." Wendy, like a blank sheet of paper, is

"scrawled all over." Peter's name is visually depicted as bolder than others, meaning that Peter Pan is just one name in the midst of a larger narrative to which Mrs. Darling has access. Using her editorial authority, Mrs. Darling "maintains her place of influence within the home while retaining her ties to Neverland and childhood freedom. The kiss [the motif Barrie uses for Mrs. Darling's awareness of childhood] symbolizes both Mrs. Darling's importance, [and] a token of her present maternity" (Fitzpatrick 20). Her influence and closeness to her children allow her to proofread their thoughts and confront her with the childhood savagery that threatens her narrative. Like an editor, Mrs. Darling seizes the imagination of her children, crossing out what does not align with the imperial narrative and adding in what is needed for the imperialist mission to flourish.

As Mrs. Darling straightens some thoughts and removes others, she fulfills the responsibilities of a mother in the height of British imperialism. Throughout the Victorian era, "the development of the child thus recapitulated the central metanarratives of liberal imperialism: the civilizing mission, the enlightenment of the heathen, and the march of progress . . . British boyhood was subject to the same intensity of revision as the British imperial mission" (Deane 690). The revision of a child's thoughts through the bedtime story validates Mrs. Darling as a successful imperial mother and the source of colonization that takes place throughout the rest of the novel.

Wendy, in due time, becomes like Mrs. Darling, telling stories and playing the role of "mother" to the Lost Boys and Peter. When Peter and Wendy meet for the first time, Barrie says that "Wendy was every inch a woman" (27). Because she is a woman and the power of the narrative is exclusive to mothers, Wendy has stepped from girl to woman to mother after meeting Peter, as symbolized in her subsequent departure from the nursery to become the Lost Boys'

mother. Wendy's practice of imperial storytelling occurs frequently throughout the novel. Beginning with the aforementioned scene, Wendy manipulates Peter's emotions by introducing him to thoughts he had never had before: "He felt for the first time that [Peter Pan] was a shortish name . . . Peter had a sinking feeling. For the first time he felt that perhaps [Neverland] was a funny address" (25-26). The language and superior tone of Wendy's conversation bends the way the story continues in her favor, making her comparatively long name and realistic street address seem greater. In fact, Barrie's form points to the indoctrination of children through colonialism. As Maureen Farrell states, for Barrie and other Victorian authors, "childhood is bound up with magic and fantasy and with features more recognisably Scottish: alienation, uncertainty of the self and the unconscious" (130). These three qualities are exactly what Wendy inspires in Peter through her influence of narrative.

Though she is capable of telling the imperial narrative, Wendy is not cognitively aware of her purpose as an imperial mother; rather, because of her upbringing under Mrs. Darling, she completes the colonial storytelling naturally. In her first exchange with Peter, Wendy follows a predetermined social script that models imperialism. She notices that Peter is taken aback from her commenting on his address: "'I mean,' Wendy said nicely, remembering that she was hostess, 'is that what they put on the letters?' [Peter] wished she had not mentioned letters" (26). Wendy remembers the set of Western societal manners exemplified for her through her mother and models them for the uncivilized Peter Pan. As Theresa Fitzpatrick writes, "Wendy's adept repair of Peter's shadow . . . mirrors the scene in which Mrs. Darling ties Mr. Darling's tie—both quietly fulfill a need, and both are quickly forgotten afterward. Emulating her mother's attitude toward her father, Wendy takes pride in this role, even in the thanklessness of it" (10). Thus, Wendy's following of her mother's example is a natural, desirable, yet largely unconscious

action. However, in her attempt to make Peter more at ease with his address, Wendy actually brings up a topic he was avoiding, as he cannot relate to the experience of getting letters. Though shaming Peter into becoming more British may not have been Wendy's conscious goal, because of the imperialist narrative that has been rooted into her, Peter builds a house in Neverland exactly to Wendy's instructions, establishing her as the Lost Boys' mother (65). Even through something as simple as children's interactions, the imperialist purpose is accomplished, even at the subconscious level.

Barrie references Wendy's storytelling generally throughout the novel, but specific instances of this practice are depicted only twice. The first is Cinderella. Wendy finishes the story for Peter, who had heard the beginning of it from Mrs. Darling (31). The second is Wendy's telling of the story of how she and her brothers arrived in Neverland, including a resolution wherein the three of them have returned to London and are grown up. Notably, the story is told as a fiction, as a simple bedtime story with elements that change from the true story. Farrell notes that Barrie is interested in one of the "key features of Scottish literature . . . the explanation of the imagination" (132). Details of Wendy's story point not only to the creative omission of details, but also to the imaginative embellishment of the truth of the story. Wendy leaves out the important addition of Peter Pan to her narrative, yet she includes the Lost Boys. She also asks her audience to "consider the feelings of the unhappy parents with all their children flown away" (99). She concludes with her projection of the future for her and her brothers. Though elements of the story are true, the fictional framework of the telling of the story displays Wendy's skill in changing the narrative through exercising imagination. Said and Spivak's commentary on the imagination as a necessary tool for narrative imperialist power is relevant here. Wendy is more powerful because she has more imagination. She does not simply articulate

the story, but in telling it, she imaginatively expresses her own desire to return home and for the others to feel some emotional response as well. Wendy accomplishes her goal, and the Lost Boys want to go home with her so that they may grow up and escape the savagery of childhood, thus fulfilling the imperialist narrative.

The story infuriates Peter, and he responds with his own story, in which his biological mother closes the window upon his return. The narrator is "not sure that this was true, but Peter thought it was true; and it scared" the Lost Boys and the Darling children (101). Peter is using the same techniques to elicit an emotional response that Wendy uses in her story. The power of imperialism comes full circle: the teller of stories is now impacted by the stories of the one that came after her. Peter's story fails to do what he wishes, however, because he uses manipulative imperialist techniques to fight the imperialist purpose. This form of storytelling is separate from the indigenous storytelling of which Peter had previously been capable. An indigenous story, as displayed through Tiger Lily and Tinker Bell, endeavors to accomplish something depending on the situation in which it is told, largely empathy from Westerners. In contrast, the imperialist narrative always seeks to accomplish a specific end: perpetuating the story to new colonists and civilizing the Other. Though Peter's goal is to make the children stay in Neverland, his use of the imperialist narrative, inevitable since Wendy indoctrinated him with it, makes Wendy want to leave for England even more urgently because that is the only end that it can accomplish: the returning to England.

Peter is not a mother; therefore, he is not British society's designated teller of stories, yet the imperialist narrative instilled in him ultimately succeeds. It is Peter's story that makes the Darling children return home, taking the Lost Boys with them. The Lost Boys, children that have

up until this point been living in a tension between propriety and savagery, finally become true Englishmen by choosing to return to the "mainland."

As seen in the final chapter, the cycle will continue even beyond the next generation: "When Margaret [Wendy's granddaughter] grows up she will have a daughter, who is to be Peter's mother in turn; and so it will go on" (159). Mrs. Darling's storytelling has created an imperialist thread that is carried through her daughter and her progeny indefinitely. As Peter will continue to take "mothers" from the mainland, the power of the imperialist narrative will continue to subjugate the natives of Neverland.

Failed Storytelling: Discounting the Other's Narrative

Barrie highlights the two Englishwomen in the novel over the two women from Neverland as an example of what Edward Said calls "Orientalism," rejecting the self-proclaimed narratives of the Other in place of a pilgrim's retelling of the Oriental experience (1). Tiger Lily and Tinker Bell are the only two characters that have no origin on the mainland with whom the children have a connection. Both are present before Wendy comes to Neverland, yet Peter and the Lost Boys never recognize them as storytellers. The obvious difference is that Wendy is a "civilized" Englishwoman who comes from a storytelling tradition. However, despite their backgrounds, Tiger Lily and Tinker Bell do tell stories and attempt to reframe their own narratives, but the unwillingness of the Lost Boys, who are the pilgrims, to listen halts their efforts and ultimately allows for the framing of their narrative by these settlers.

Tiger Lily is the only member of the native tribe of Neverland to be described in great detail. Amid a long description of the tribe, Barrie notes, "Bringing up the rear, the place of greatest danger, comes Tiger Lily, proudly erect, a princess in her own right. She is the most

beautiful of dusky Dianas and the belle of the Piccaninnies[3], coquettish, cold and amorous by turns; there is not a brave who would not have the wayward thing to wife, but she staves off the altar with a hatchet" (53). Behind this glimpse of Tiger Lily, Barrie establishes that she has been born in and never removed from Neverland and is thus a truer native of the island than the Lost Boys or Peter. The entirety of her history is based in Neverland at least for a few generations, as she is the "princess," or daughter of the chief. For this reason, she is highly significant in her home culture. She walks on the war path in "the place of greatest danger," a position which shows her skill as a warrior within her society. Her status contrasts her with Englishwomen, as fighting was a position that belonged exclusively to Englishmen during the Edwardian era, emphasizing her Otherness. She is valued within her own society, though, because she protects her people and is trusted by them to do so. She is held in a powerful and unique position within her tribe for a specific purpose: to tell the narrative of her people's safety.

However, the story that is being told within this vignette is not one where Tiger Lily is the main character. In fact, she is hardly given any self-defining qualities at all. Tiger Lily's actions, voice, and physicality are never self-defined. All of her characteristics are described for her by Westerners, in the form of the Lost Boys, Peter, and the Darling children, within the narrative. Tiger Lily never speaks for herself except when worshipping Peter: "'Me Tiger Lily . . . Peter Pan save me, me his velly nice friend. Me no let pirates hurt him'" (91). Tiger Lily's native language is never represented, and her one statement is broken and stereotyped in dialect. Though Tiger Lily may have said more to Peter during this scene, Barrie highlights the omission of her holistic character by erasing the power and quantity of her language. The only narrative Tiger Lily expresses in the novel is the submission to a Westerner, recalling Said's theory of

[3] "Picaninny" is an archaic, derogatory word that refers to "a Black child" (n. pag.).

pilgrimage, wherein the stories told for and of the Other are selectively filtered by the pilgrim for some personal use.

In depicting Tiger Lily this way, Barrie does not ignore the harmfulness of this storytelling. Tiger Lily is described in the narration in a unique, generally positive way: "Tiger Lily, the Indian princess, presents another interesting case as she fits into neither the maternal role nor that of the 'bad girl.' She is strong, beautiful, proud, independent" (Fitzpatrick 15). At the end of Tiger Lily's dialogue, the narrator comments, "She was far too pretty to cringe in this way, but Peter thought it his due, and he would answer condescendingly" (91). The image is an uncomfortable one. Tiger Lily, despite being an Other, is described in terms of beauty throughout the text, much like Wendy. Her beauty is juxtaposed with negative words like "cringe," while Peter is the agent of this condescension. Peter is acting out the power given to him as a white Westerner by the narrative he has learned from Wendy. This shift in his own personal narrative renders him unable to understand the Other. The narrator directly states that this sort of power is "not really good for [Peter]" (91). The subtext is that Tiger Lily, though depicted as submissive, is actually being manipulated under Peter's control. As Ann Wilson writes, the depictions of Tiger Lily as beautiful yet manipulated highlight the fact that "Lurking in that unconscious is an anxiety about female sexuality as dangerous and, in the case of aboriginal populations as they are subjugated in the colonizing enterprise of imperialism" (n. pag.). Tiger Lily's beauty magnifies the tragedy brought not just to herself but also to her entire tribe.

The power of appropriated stories, especially in Tiger Lily's case, extends beyond her own personal narrative. This expressed submission to Peter affects Tiger Lily's tribe at large. Due to their devotion to Peter, the tribe camps outside of the Lost Boys' home in order to protect

them from the pirates. This decision ultimately leads to their demise by the pirates: "[It was] a massacre rather than a fight. Thus perished many of the flower of the Piccaninny tribe" (108). The tribe is significantly weakened by this interaction and is not mentioned in the text again. Though the narrative of the tribe has been deleted for characters within *Peter Pan*, Barrie's representation of the tribe as a group of massacred, tragic victims within the text fulfills Spivak's theory of equivalence through reading literature. Within the world of the story, however, Tiger Lily is not a mother because her narrative is ignored by the white men in power.

Even closer to the Lost Boys than Tiger Lily is Tinker Bell, the companion to Peter Pan and most vehement opponent of Wendy. Tinker Bell is a secondary character, yet she provides a necessary contrast with Wendy, as her "femininity, exotic otherness, and magical energy combine to make her an object of fascination" (Meyers, et al. 102). Despite being highlighted by Barrie in such a way, her narrative is largely ignored by Peter and the Lost Boys in the novel, though the entirety of her identity is placed in them. Barrie describes Tinker Bell and Peter's relationship through Peter's translation of and dialogue with Tinker Bell: "'She is not very polite. She says you are a great ugly girl, and that she is my fairy" (29). While her impoliteness is contrasted against Wendy's polite social script, the most important part of Tinker Bell's introduction to Wendy is that she is Peter's fairy. A portion of her self-proclaimed identity is that she belongs to Peter, despite the fact that she cannot be Peter's fairy because he is "'a gentleman and [Tink] is a lady'" (Barrie 29). In spite of this statement from Peter, he treats Tinker Bell as if she belongs to him. She returns in many scenes throughout the book, showing that Tinker Bell is often included in Peter's everyday life.

Unlike Tiger Lily, Tinker Bell has a language that the Lost Boys and Peter understand. To the Edwardian British reader, "Barrie's Tinker Bell [would be an] impulsive, pre-linguistic

fairy" (Meyers, et al. 112). Much like Barrie's largely Western audience, Wendy is never able to understand Tinker Bell's language, except for her common catchphrase, "You silly ass." Towards the end of the novel, Barrie writes, "She had said it so often that Wendy needed no translation" (96). This instance is the only one where Wendy comprehends the fairy language on her own. It is but a nominal understanding enforced through repetition, and Wendy does not change her ideology of imperialism or negative opinion of Tinker Bell.

Regardless of how familiar she is with the Lost Boys, because of the divide between her as a Neverland inhabitant and the boys as Englanders, she is still viewed as an Other and not as a storytelling mother. While Tinker Bell and Wendy establish no relationship, except a few argumentative encounters, Tinker Bell is so integrated into the lives of the Lost Boys that she has a room in their home: "There was one recess in the wall, no larger than a bird-cage, which was the private apartment of Tinker Bell" (70). Barrie drives a deeper social divide between Tinker Bell's living quarters and her character. Her name is directly linked to "her work as a mender of pots and pans—a typical gypsy trade in the British society of Barrie's time and one that linked her character to pre-industrialized spirituality and a marginalized people" (Meyers, et al. 105). Her living quarters reframe Tinker Bell's lower-class Otherness into the Lost Boys and Peter's Englishness, but this reframing does not award Tinker Bell motherhood. In fact, when Peter suggests, "'Perhaps Tink wants to be my mother?'" Tinker Bell simply responds, "You silly ass!" (96) Neither Tinker Bell nor the Lost Boys consider her their mother, and thus they will not ultimately act out her cultural narrative.

Prior to Wendy's integration into the Lost Boys' household, however, Tinker Bell tells one story that the Lost Boys enact: shooting down Wendy. As soon as Wendy arrives in Neverland, Tinker Bell flies ahead of Peter and the Darling children to tell the Lost Boys that

"'Peter wants you to shoot the Wendy'" (59). The boys, because they have never seen a white girl before, mistake Wendy for "'a great white bird'" and shoot her down with bows and arrows (58). The boys are quick to act on their childish, savage tendencies and listen to Tinker Bell's narrative. Their actions point to their need of the imperial story, as they understand the narrative of the Other through Tinker Bell better than they do a woman of their own nationality.

Peter is furious when he learns of Tinker Bell's twisted narrative and nearly kills one of his own Lost Boys: "He raised the arrow to use it as a dagger [on Toodles]" (61). His anger is evidence that Wendy is valuable to him as a mother. Peter has listened to Mrs. Darling's stories prior to this scene and is thus indoctrinated enough with the imperial narrative to want a mother for himself in Neverland, even if it costs him one of his own men, Tootles, or his old friend, Tinker Bell. Peter says to Tinker Bell, "I am your friend no more. Begone from me forever" (62). Even though Peter does not force Tinker Bell to carry out her punishment, he and the Lost Boys do not listen to Tinker Bell's false narratives anymore, and Wendy becomes the primary storyteller. This action signifies the shift from childhood savagery to adulthood, represented through the distrust of Tinker Bell to accepting Wendy as mother.

The dismissal of the Lost Boys further harms Tinker Bell as the narrative of her native Neverland starts to change with the arrival of Wendy.[4] Though this new imperial narrative has taken the place of Tinker Bell's narrative, she continues to live amongst the Lost Boys because she still holds on to them as part of her identity. However, being subverted under a narrative that calls for the subjugation of the Other ultimately puts Tinker Bell in a dangerous and vulnerable position.

[4] In fact, in Tinker Bell's first scene in the novel, she is shown as being trapped: "In [Peter's] delight he forgot that he had shut Tinker Bell up in the drawer" (Barrie 25). Though this initial image of entrapment is not as important as the second, where Tinker Bell drinks Peter's poison, it foreshadows the peril that is to befall her for her devotion to Peter.

Even as Wendy and the Lost Boys leave Neverland for London and are captured by the pirates unbeknownst to Peter, Peter continues to live out the imperial notion of propriety, as displayed in his drinking of medicine. Tinker Bell, however, knows that the medicine has been poisoned by Captain Hook. Because Peter no longer listens to Tinker Bell's narratives, true or untrue, he does not listen to her warnings, so she drinks the medicine to save him: "No time for words now; time for deeds, and with one of her lightning movements Tink got between his lips and the draught, and drained it to the dregs" (117). Her worship of Peter drives her actions and very nearly causes her death. This moment is "Tink's moment of shining glory when she does something for Peter which Wendy has not. . . . Tink is, for a brief moment, the superior female character'" (Fitzpatrick 18, 19). The issue is that the imperial narrative has so distorted Peter's viewpoint that Tinker Bell nearly dies as a result, even if she does display a worshipful act of heroism. In order to save her, Peter is drawn back into childhood savagery and calls upon "boys and girls in their nighties, and naked papooses [or Native American children] in their baskets hung from trees" (118). The listing of the two groups alongside each other visually connects and compares them. Both Western children and indigenous children are recognized by Peter Pan as helpful for erasing the harm of the imperial story upon the Other. He does not call upon the help of adults to save her, as only the help of savage children can restore to life the narrative of the Other, in this case, Tinker Bell.

As a result of this experience, Peter stays in Neverland and remains a child at the end of the novel. Though he was a part of the imperial narrative for much of the novel, he is finally forced to confront the harmfulness that Wendy's narrative can inflict on the Other. Though this toxicity may have pushed Peter towards a temporary revelation, he will eventually forget Tinker Bell entirely due to her death and Peter's characteristic forgetfulness, yet he will return for

Wendy's progeny. In the last chapter of the novel, Peter asks, "'Who is Tinker Bell?' . . . 'There are such a lot of them,' he said. 'I expect she is no more now'" (152). Regardless of Peter's epiphany of equivalence, the imperialist narrative will live on through him as he seeks the motherhood of the Darling women.

The definitive difference between the Darling women and the two native Neverland women is their narrative, caused by their background. The Darling women, as white Victorian Englanders are tellers of the imperial story, where Tinker Bell and Tiger Lily are non-white (or non-human) Neverland natives who live in a culture that reinforces the savagery of childhood. This is why the Darling women are seen as mothers by the white, English Lost Boys, while the Neverland women are ignored as Others. This distinction is harmful, hurting the native women because of the nature of the imperial narrative as one that rejects Spivak's equivalence and cultural understanding. Peter, however, is the fulfillment of the novel's opening line: "All children, except one, grow up" (7). Though the Darling brothers and the Lost Boys choose the imperial narrative permanently, Peter will forever live in the tension between savage child and young imperialist as he travels between visiting England and colonizing Neverland, much like the generation of young readers to whom Barrie wrote.

Conclusion: Mothers Sustaining or Changing the Imperialist Narrative

In 1911, the Great Exhibition still stood in London, and Barrie novelized his most famous play, creating *Peter Pan* ("Barrie, J.M.," n. pag.). In such a rapidly changing culture, it was not coincidental that J.M. Barrie, a Scottish writer, wrote a novel for children with mystifying themes centering around characters like the Lost Boys, the Darling children, fairies, and native peoples of Neverland. Imperial indoctrination was at the heart of British Victorian and Edwardian culture, though there was a distinct unrest amongst Scottish members of the British

people. A mere nine years after the publishing of *Peter Pan,* "a literary group known as the Scottish Literary Renaissance, led by Hugh MacDiarmid, argued strongly in favor of Scottish independence" ("Scottish Nationalism," n. pag.). From there, the idea of a separate Scottish identity arose centuries after the joining of Scotland and England as Britain in 1707 ("Scottish Nationalism," n. pag.). As time marched on, the Scottish Nationalists would gain popularity and momentum, resulting in discussions of Scottish independence that still take place today. To a Scottish writer living in London, the hub of British imperialism, such a movement may have inspired a new work that represents the overtly nationalistic culture of England overall.

J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* is haunted by the Victorian era's imperialist culture. Barrie writes Wendy and her mother to be cultural influencers and colonial proselytizers that bring the Lost Boys from a life of living amongst the Other in their childhood to growing up within the bounds of English propriety. Tiger Lily and Tinker Bell fail at this because they are non-English Others who are marveled at yet ignored. *Peter Pan* is an attempt to turn away from Said's pilgrim towards Spivak's equivalence, in which the hurt caused to non-Englanders is tragic but redeemable. The fascination with *Peter Pan*'s whimsy enthralled Edwardians and modern readers alike, but the poor treatment of the Other in the novel continues to astound and confuse. *Peter Pan* offers an allegory within the genre of children's literature so that Edwardians, once familiar with the world of Neverland, might be able in time to understand their own world. Like the Scots, and indeed, like Barrie himself, the Other in Neverland continue to tell their stories, working for an ultimate change in narrative, starting with a call to empathy.

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Essay

Carly Cole

Joe Christmas: A Reflection of Melancholia

Throughout his career, William Faulkner wrote novels with extremely complex characters, and his novel *Light in August*, in particular, portrays a deeply divided "human heart in conflict with itself" ("Banquet Speech," n. pag.). During the 1930s, there was a significant focus on internal conflict within the individual, and this notion was not only explored by writers but by psychoanalysts as well. Around the time Faulkner's novel *Light in August* was published in 1932, psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud was already famous for his psychoanalytic theories that eventually laid the foundation for modern psychology. Freud frequently studied the contradictions within the human psyche, and his theory on melancholia from *Mourning and Melancholia* is strikingly similar to the inner conflict Faulkner displays within the character Joe Christmas from *Light in August*. For Christmas, it is the crisis of his racial identity which is at the center of his divided psyche. An application of Freud's theory of melancholia to the story of Joe Christmas can explain why Christmas's identity as a Black man in the postbellum South creates such an extreme psychological war within him and how his internal conflict drives him to self-destruction. Freud's theory of melancholia reveals that Christmas's inability to move past his desire to be white is because he made this desire a part of his identity as a child when his id (his Blackness) chose to idealize that which it was not (complete whiteness).

While Faulkner insisted "that he had not read Freud," it is more than likely "he had heard a lot of talk about Freudian psychology" (Blotner 147). Faulkner may or may not have been

familiar with Freud's theory on melancholia, but he depicts diagnosable melancholia in Joe Christmas. However, before Freud's theory can be utilized to explain Christmas's psyche, one must be familiar with Freud's id, ego, and superego because they are the three warring divisions of the mind that create melancholia. In Freud's book *The Ego and the Id*, he outlines the qualities of the ego. The ego, conscious of the id and the superego, is constantly balancing the demands of both (Freud, *The Ego* 7). In order to maintain a psychological equilibrium, the ego will compromise with the id and the superego and, pertaining to Joe Christmas, repress the id. That which the ego represses are the unconscious "residue of memories" from the id (10). These memories have the possibility of becoming conscious again if the ego does not keep them repressed. Freud describes the id's drive as a "repressed impulse" that can compel the ego to carry out its instinctual, unconscious desires (12). In opposition to the id, there is the superego which Freud states is "not simply a residue of the earliest object-choices of the id; it also represents an energetic reaction-formation against those choices" (24). In other words, the superego develops its moral code in opposition to the id. While the relationship between the ego and the id is one of repression, the relationship between the ego and the superego is one of guilt. Overall, the three entities work alongside each other in the human psyche, and the dynamic between the id, ego, and superego help in understanding Christmas's identity crisis.

The id, ego, and superego are crucial to Freud's theory on melancholia because melancholia is a result of each agent asserting its will over the other. Freud describes melancholia as a disorder that occurs when "an object which was lost has been set up again inside the ego—that is, that an object-cathexis has been replaced by an identification" (18). Freud's theory states that lost object is the love object (which is chosen by the id), and it can be "the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as fatherland, liberty, an

ideal, and so on" (Freud, *General Psychological Theory* 164). The object-cathexis is the investment of energy or libido toward the object. In melancholia, "The free libido was withdrawn into the ego and not directed to another object . . . [it] served simply to establish *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object" (170). Since the ego subsumes the id's love object into its identity, the superego forces the ego to admit "its guilt" as a result of identifying with the "repressed impulses" of the primitive id, and the ego "submits to the punishment" (*The Ego* 41). Not only is the ego trying to fight off the judgement of the superego, but it is also fighting off the "murderous impulses" of the id that pressures the ego to reject all common sense and reality through the identification with the love object (43). As a result of being attacked by both the id and the superego, the ego exhibits a "fall of self-esteem" and unconsciously perceives that "the loss is one in himself," not the loss of an object (*General Psychological Theory* 165-168). The common characteristics of melancholia are a "profoundly painful dejection, abrogation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment" (165). Another characteristic of melancholia is the culmination of the death instinct originating in the id, spurred on by the superego, and subject to the strength of the ego alone to prevent self-destruction (*The Ego* 43-46). To conclude, melancholia is "complicated by the conflict of ambivalence" within one's identity which is precisely the same conflict Joe Christmas struggles with throughout his life (*General Psychological Theory* 177).

Before identifying the traits and stages of melancholia in Christmas's story, it is imperative to determine the three warring sides of his psyche (his id, ego, and superego) that will clash in melancholia and lead to his death. First, the id is the repressed side of a person's psyche

which is, for Christmas, his racial identity, and more specifically, his "black blood" (Faulkner, *Light* 449). Christmas's id develops when his grandfather, Doc Hines, teaches Christmas that he is different from the other children at the white orphanage. Doc Hines puts the words "Nigger! Nigger! in the innocent mouths of little children," and he insinuates to Christmas that "God has marked" his face, alluding to the mark of Cain, in order to reinforce a negative connotation of Christmas's skin color (*Light* 382-383). The dietitian also uses derogatory language to refer to Christmas as Black which, in addition to Doc Hines, influences Christmas to make "the irrevocable choice [which] is made in freedom but commits the chooser to the past" (Adamowski 242). Christmas willingly chooses to believe that he really is "the nigger of the children's taunts, of the dietitian's mysterious rage, of the judgment of Hines," and this identity becomes his id (242). However, this identity choice comes with guilt and shame which are the effects of Christmas's superego. As Freud states, the superego is a reaction to the id, and the superego causes him to deny the id's choice, now a permanent and intrinsic truth, which he commits himself to as a child. Because Christmas's id embodies his Black identity, his superego naturally rejects it and cultivates in him the desire to be the antithesis of the id—white. Not only does his superego drive him to secure any fragment of whiteness in his identity, but the white culture of the South (that forms a part of his superego) also reinforces a sort of moral code in him that promotes the belief that being white is good and being Black is bad. Christmas's id and superego are two warring forces that depict "the problem of the American mulatto whose position is ambiguous because no matter how small his proportion of Negro blood may be, according to Southern genetics, he is treated the same as a full-blooded Negro" (Slabey 267). While there is a problem with the way society identifies him, there is also a problem with the way Christmas identifies himself. For a person without melancholia, the ego would keep the peace between the

id and the superego by repressing the id and by pursuing the ideal of the superego in a manner that makes sense to the ego's understanding of the outside world. Christmas's ego is what drives him to assume an ambiguous identity that is neither Black nor white, but "rootless" (Faulkner, *Light* 31). This ambiguous identity is the compromise his ego makes between his id and superego. However, Christmas is not a mentally stable person but a melancholiac, by Freud's definition, which is why he cannot survive his ego's futile battle to remain "rootless" when his love object is lost and his ego is overpowered (31).

Since the loss of the love object is the catalyst for melancholia, defining Christmas's love object is crucial in order to explain the reasons for his actions and his death. Early on in his childhood, his first father figure, Doc Hines, influences him to believe he is part Black, but at the same time, establishes the white race as his ideal race. In reaction to the "more negative of the two identities," Christmas chooses whiteness as his love object (Sandstrom 217). The energy he puts into denying his Blackness and forming a white identity, vicariously through his many white female lovers, portrays his object-cathexis (the energy invested in the love object). His ego unconsciously represses the acknowledgment of his Black identity as a child, but it is an intrinsic truth that lurks in the back of his mind as he pursues the love object. Once McEachern adopts him, Christmas learns of another ideal—Puritanism. McEachern expects Christmas to live up to the virtues of Puritanism, but his burgeoning sexuality complicates this ideal. When he tries to lose his virginity with the Black girl in the shed, "he did not even think of it as a sin until he thought of the man who would be waiting for him at home" (Faulkner, *Light* 156). Not only does this sexual encounter challenge the moral code McEachern gives him, but also the Black girl forces him to come face-to-face with the racial identity he has been repressing for years. Racial

identity and religious identity become intertwined in Joe Christmas due to his two father figures, and he eventually uses sex as a mean to retain his whiteness (in other words, his love object).

It is his sexual relationship with his first love Bobbie, a waitress moonlighting as a prostitute, which results in the loss of his love object and acts as the inciting incident of his melancholia. Throughout the novel, Christmas uses white women as "mirrors" to see whiteness in himself, and this desire is his superego driving the ego to pursue the ideal while repressing his id (Sandstrom 212). But "Memory believes before knowing remembers," and his superego, being the reaction to the id, is conscious of the "shameful" truth of his racial identity even when he is not actively remembering the moment of his racial awakening at the orphanage (Faulkner, *Light* 119). Since the superego knows he is part Black, the superego and his id work in tandem to sabotage his relationship with Bobbie. His superego thinks he is not racially worthy of a white woman, and his id impulsively wants to break free of the censorship of the ego and be consciously acknowledged. As a result, the forces of Christmas's id and superego overpower his ego when he confesses to Bobbie he is part Black (*Light* 196). Bobbie is shocked, but it is not until after Christmas possibly kills McEachern that she condemns him. Her disapproval displays a white woman, or a "white mirror," failing him for the first time (Sandstrom 212). Later, when Christmas proposes to Bobbie, she screams racially derogatory words at him and turns his proposal down. Her rejection shatters the reflection of whiteness Christmas had gotten used to seeing and reminds him of the Black identity that he has repressed. In a single moment, he realizes that he may never be able to transcend beyond the unknown quantity of Blackness within him; therefore, he loses the facade of his pure white identity (his love object). While a mentally stable person would detach from the lost love object and move on, Christmas's ego does the opposite and incorporates his love object as a part of his own identity (as is the case in

melancholia). In other words, he establishes "*identification* of the ego with the abandoned object," the lost white identity, so much so that it casts a white shadow over his life (Freud, *General Psychological Theory* 168-170). This lost love object ignites an immense sense of guilt, shame, and a desire for self-annihilation as a result of him having lost the chance to make his white identity real in the outside world.

In reaction to losing his love object and his ego's subsequent incorporation of it within his self-identity, his id, ego, and superego become imbalanced. As a result, they fight to assert dominance over his mind. After possibly killing McEachern and being heartbroken by Bobbie, Christmas runs away from home, and "During his trek on this fifteen-year street, Joe escapes an identity-choice" (Sandstrom 214). Once again, he denies the truth of his id, his Blackness, by repressing it as he runs away from his past. When he is on the run, Christmas displays several traits of the melancholiac: he runs from "painful dejection," he never creates a permanent life for himself (like a career or family), he lives in a vortex of "self-reproaches and self-revilings," and he lives with the "expectation of punishment" (Freud, *General Psychological Theory* 165). One example of his self-deprecating cycles is when he had sex with "the women [prostitutes] and paid them when he had the money, and when he did not have it he bedded anyway and then told them that he was a negro" (Faulkner, *Light* 224). Christmas experiences whiteness vicariously by having sex with white women, and he expects them to punish him, either through judgment or physical attacks, when he tells them that he is part Black. In the one instance when he is not punished but accepted by a white prostitute, he physically assaults the prostitute because he feels he must be punished (an effect of his superego) for being biracial. His ego fights off his id and his superego for fifteen years on the run, and that enables him to be the "rootless" man who comes to work a "negro's job at the mill" for three years with the arrogance and demeanor of a

white man (*Light* 31, 36). However, his final sexual relationship with Joanna Burden destroys his ego and the illusion of his ambiguous identity.

Unlike his relationships with Bobbie and the white prostitutes, Christmas uses Joanna Burden to reflect his ambiguous identity—not his white identity (*Light* 31). By remaining unidentifiable, his ego creates a sort of equilibrium between the id and the superego which survives for a few years when he is with Joanna. At the beginning of their relationship, "Joanna Burden offers a haven for both the degenerate white and the Negro" because she does not force him to identify as Black or white (Sandstrom 217). During their relationship, Christmas's id and superego pursue punishment and acknowledgement by raping his white lover Joanna, but he receives no retaliation from her nor society. In addition, her sexual fanaticism in the second phase of their relationship provides an "escape-from-reality" which allows Christmas to continue living in denial (Slabey 276). Eventually, the relationship loses its "novelty," and he begins to "see, perhaps with foreboding and premonition, the savage and lonely street which he had chosen of his own will, waiting for him, thinking *This is not my life. I dont belong here*" (Faulkner, *Light* 258). This thought depicts Christmas's id lurking in the unconsciousness of his mind, driving him to be that which he hates—Black—and to stop repressing his truth with the facade of a racially ambiguous identity he has in his relationship with Joanna.

Unfortunately, Joanna starts to think about salvation after the extreme sinfulness of their sexual deeds which causes her to adopt a religious identity. She tries to reconcile their sexual sins through marriage, but Christmas is not interested in atoning, nor is he interested in adopting a religious identity with her as a married couple. In response, she tries to sweeten the deal of marriage by telling Christmas how he can go to an African American school and then take over her business. However, this proposal offends Christmas's superego and threatens his

identification with his love object (his whiteness). Not only is Joanna forcing Christmas to identify as a Black man, but she is pushing Christmas to pray with her which is when she "becomes the puritan foster-father, again trying to imprint a white man's religion on a Negro" (Sandstrom 217). Joanna becomes both Doc Hines and McEachern in the sense that she is pressuring Christmas to adopt two identities he has lived his entire life rejecting. Christmas thinks to himself, "If I give in now, I will deny all the thirty years that I have lived to make me what I chose to be" (Faulkner, *Light* 265). As a result, Christmas kills Joanna because she insists on no longer reflecting ambiguity but instead his Blackness, which he must continue to reject in order to deny the loss of his love object.

The final act of Christmas's life depicts the melancholiac's destructive impulses being turned inward. By killing Joanna, his self-hatred and guilt have no one else to project on to except himself; therefore, he is subject to the wrath of the id and superego once again. On the run, Christmas travels through Freedman Town where "he found himself," or more specifically, where he realized the truth of his id which had been repressed all along (*Light* 114). However, when Christmas becomes "aware of the black blood in his veins, he is obliged to defy it" (Sandstrom 217). Since he acknowledges his partial Blackness, the truth of the id overpowers and destroys his ego, thus setting his id and superego on a course to destruction. His id, "under the domination of the mute but powerful death instincts," drives him to self-destruction because his Blackness is not something he can live with, seeing as whiteness is a part of his own identity through the identification with the love object (Freud, *The Ego* 49). In addition, his superego, the ultimate judge, does not stop his id from seeking out death because his superego, as it does in melancholia, desires the punishment and annihilation of the id. His death instinct is evident when he escapes from jail only to run to Hightower's house to be inevitably found like "It was as

though he had set out and made his plans to passively commit suicide," and he allows himself to be shot "to death, with that loaded and unfired pistol in his hand" (Faulkner, *Light* 443, 449). In addition, his castration at the hands of the white Percy Grimm is exactly the final punishment his superego desires for his id—the whiteness punishing the Blackness for existing and for making the love object forever unattainable.

Throughout his life, Christmas wages a futile war within himself by rejecting his Black identity in order to pursue his desired white identity. While "He cannot become a white man…he can will the death that cancels out" his Blackness, thus freeing him from the psychological turmoil he lives with for thirty-three years (Sandstrom 218). According to Freud, not all melancholiacs commit suicide, but the destruction of the ego removes all instincts of self-preservation, which Christmas needed to counteract his self-hatred (Freud, *The Ego* 30). It is possible that if Joanna allowed Christmas to remain "rootless" then he would have never felt the need to kill her and, ultimately, himself (Faulkner, *Light* 31). However, if he could have been an ambiguous entity all his life, then Joe Christmas's story would not portray such a powerful problem "of the human heart in conflict with itself" (Faulkner, "Banquet Speech," n. pag.). Even though Christmas's story has no happy ending, it is "worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat" because his story depicts the universal struggle of all human beings fighting an internal war within themselves ("Banquet Speech," n. pag.).

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Commentary

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Book Matters

Twelve students shuffle awkwardly, scrambling over backpacks, leaning against over-stuffed bookshelves, muttering apologies for stepping on each other's toes. The small room—an alcove, really—is packed to the rafters with old paperbacks, mostly popular science fiction and fantasy novels. I pull a few nostalgic favorites from the shelf and thumb passively through their pages, most marked in pencil on the inner cover: $1.50, $2.75. The bookstore's proprietor, Mr. Jim Reed, elbows me gently.

"Do these kids read?" he asks.

"You know, they really do!" I assure him.

"Good" he guffaws.

Several months earlier, I had wandered into Reed Books for the first time. I had recently completed a week-long summer class on "Teaching the History of the Book" at the University of Virginia's Rare Book School and was feeling inspired to build my own teaching collection. At UVA, our instructor had regularly produced near-priceless volumes from his extensive personal archives and the vast special collections of Thomas Jefferson's university. In the morning, we'd pass around a twelfth-century Paris Bible, written in a hand so miniscule and uniform it was difficult to believe it was the work of a human scribe; in the afternoon, we'd gather around a Kelmscott Chaucer or the Lakeside Press first edition of Moby Dick, lavishly illustrated by Rockwell Kent. I knew my acquisitions would have to be far humbler, but I was confident that my few hundred dollars and my eye for odd, imperfect, and not-particularly-valuable items could

build a set of books that would help my students learn to orient themselves in the vocabulary and landscape of book history.

When I staggered up to the cashier's counter with an arm full of books, Mr. Reed raised his eyebrow at me: "Nine Harlequin paperback romances, two Hebrew prayerbooks, an uncovered biography of William Clark, and a threadbare child's grammar?" The question, *what could you possibly want with this combination of books?* went silently unasked. "I'm teaching a course on the History of the Book at Samford in the Fall," I explained. "These ones have some interesting features: the 1923 prayer books read right to left and give parallel text in Hebrew and German; you can see the stitching of the binding really clearly in the Clark biography, and the grammar is annotated by at least three child readers."

"And the Harlequins?"

"It's the best example of mass print I know of. Look at these covers! The advertising, the visual rhetoric . . . it's so heavy-handed that you just *have* to acknowledge that the material form of a book matters."

Mr. Reed smirked a little, added up the total of the pencil-marks written in the books, looked at the number, and said "I'll give you a 10% discount. Bring your students down here in the Fall." I thanked him, took one of his business cards, and headed home to inspect my bounty. When autumn arrived, the steady drumbeat of a single question drove our class: *how does the material form of the book produce meaning*? Over the course of the semester, students in English 336 asked (and were asked) this question over and over again, interrogating objects ranging from a sixteenth-century Geneva Bible in Samford's Special Collection, to an eighteenth-century wearable Ge'ez prayer book made in Ethiopia, to (of course) the Harlequin romances and a best-selling children's "Vook" ("video book") "read" aloud by yours truly from an iPad. They learned

about histories of print, struggling to set type and roll ink on a hand press. They repurposed their

phones as flashlights to identify chain-lines in hand-made paper. They counted signatures, battled collation formulas, chased down water marks, and agonized over incomplete printers' catalogues and census records. They trolled rare book auction sites and used bookstores. They read alongside past readers, interpreting annotations (and in one case, flowers) left behind in books to understand how we mark books and how, in turn, they mark us.

What emerged from these many conversations was, I hope, a recognition of the embodied and undeniably human work that goes into making, circulating, collecting, reading, and loving

books. Book historian Michael Suarez is known to argue that, contrary to the idiom that gives honor to anthropology, *bibliography* is the most humanistic of the sciences. After a semester in the classroom seeing the people who labored over these books come to life for my students, I have to agree. As we gained a new appreciation for the physical work of calligraphy, or paper-making, or a hand-stitched binding, we came to recognize the skill of the craftspeople who made books, whether they were medieval illuminated manuscripts, or the ornate heritage edition of the Saint John's Bible held in Samford's own Special Collection.

We got to know the people who care for these books and the stories contained in their pages and see the communities who preserve and steward them. The expertise of Samford's librarians, especially Jennifer Taylor, Lori Northrup, and Sarah Cooper, was on full display throughout the class, as they answered questions and solved research problems that I could not begin to tackle. We witnessed the great potential and responsibility of archival research thanks to Dr. Kathy King of the University of Montevallo, who helped us see the African American voices of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Alabama from Samford's own archives, showing us how to read for Black stories in predominantly white collections.

When it came time to complete their own final projects, students researched and composed the "life story" of a book of their choice, tracking down through stubborn and immensely innovative methods the people who created, published, bought, read, used, and altered books. As is apparent in even a cursory read of the class's final projects, which students

meticulously stitched into a hand-bound quarto edition of collected essays, "conventional" research methods could only take the authors of these papers so far.

Instead of the usual process of finding a few peer reviewed articles and performing careful close readings, these projects instead required students to exercise some incredibly creative problem solving skills: they dug through catalogue data, interviewed librarians, compared nineteenth-century artist monograms by hand, watched YouTube videos on bookbinding techniques and, in one case, called up a classmate's father's Polish-speaking friend to plead for a plausible translation of a letter inscribed in near-

unintelligible hand in the front of a book. The resulting volume of essays, short stories, and works of creative non-fiction covers an impressive range of texts and contexts, from cherished family Bibles, to beloved children's classics, to collector's editions of poetry and verse, with subjects ranging from a modern edition of an eleventh-century classic of Japanese literature to a tabletop edition of Webster's Dictionary. The physicality of the book, the labor of the people behind it, and the embodiment of its users seems sometimes to have an almost mystical quality. To me, that enchantment comes from seeing remnants, however small, of someone like or unlike ourselves in the material traces left behind in a book. As Mr. Reed told us in that crowded alcove last October: the oils of your fingers and the fingers of all a book's past readers remain detectable in the margins of pages for centuries. When you pick up a book, you're not reading alone.

Essay

Greg Young

Did They Think They Were Gods? Masculinity as Performance in *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*

Alfred Hitchcock can be credited immensely for his groundbreaking work in cinema, but if he should be regarded highly for anything at all, one cannot deny his commitment to uncovering the human psyche. The auteur founded his filmmaking career around telling stories that challenge the psychology of both his male and female characters. As many of his films also deal with sex and violence, this interest in the inner machinations of Hitchcock's characters yields some fascinating models for understanding human motivation. A common archetype that Hitchcock returns to frequently is that of a male character who, in one way or another, has his patriarchal authority stolen from him and then must attempt to restore that identity by any means necessary. Whether the male characters' lack of agency is social, circumstantial, or regressive, the cinema of Hitchcock follows their struggle to reform to a superior image, usually culminating in a way that leaves the male protagonist in the same position in which they began. This struggle with identity is incompatible with patriarchal roles and requires the construction of a new identity to relieve them of their existential wandering. In his films *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*, Hitchcock exposes a central conflict cycle within patriarchal psychology: the male confronts his own insecurity and crafts a new identity in hopes of crafting an illusory visage of strength, but the attempts to find meaning in this identity struggle bear no fruit, revealing the illusory nature of masculine power structures.

Hitchcock's 1954 classic *Rear Window* approaches the cycle of masculine identity performance through male identification with a female character, defining the intersection between psychology and gender that will serve as the basis for both the analysis of *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*. *Rear Window* depicts the last weeks of L.B. Jefferies's wheelchair-bound isolation in his apartment. A photographer, Jefferies broke a leg while photographing a car crash and now spends his time alleviating his boredom by observing the happenings of his neighbors. He looks out on the courtyard and imagines worlds for many of his neighbors, but when Mrs. Thorwald stops appearing in her window, he begins to suspect that her husband has killed her. Jefferies, unable to physically investigate, ropes in his nurse Stella and his girlfriend Lisa to help him uncover the truth.

The relationship between Jeff and Lisa serves as the basis for the arguments of identity formation present in the film. Lisa is deeply infatuated with Jeff, yet he resists nearly all of her advances as he believes she is incapable of living a non-frivolous lifestyle. Jeff spends much of the film criticizing Lisa for her career in fashion making them incompatible. He exclaims, "Can you see me driving down to the fashion salon in a jeep, wearing combat boots and a three day beard?" (*Rear Window* 00:21:05). The irony is that Jeff's state as an invalid is keeping him from doing that same thing. Jeff expresses his desire to fit a kind of masculinity that he is no longer able to achieve. He claims that his world is the world of adventure, danger, and freedom, yet the audience is only able to see his world as confined to his own apartment. The film is shot almost entirely from the perspective of Jefferies's apartment, only leaving Jeff's side for moments of action. Hitchcock's use of setting here is incredibly suggestive: the man who desires to escape his place in the patriarchal order is trapped there, unable to get out on his own. Jeff is now the example of the male whose authority is stolen from him. However, Lisa, the fashion model,

exhibits incredible agency in her own world, detailing to Jeff her many triumphs and successes in her day's work. Jeff's injuries and isolation disqualify him from existing as the superior male he wants to be, firmly placing him in a world that does not reward his masculine ideals but rather the female's independence. As Fawell puts it, "Jeff can dream but he cannot do" (92), and as the audience will continue to see, Lisa is very capable of doing.

As the film continues, Jeff begins to identify with Lisa's active role in the film. Near the climax of the film, Jeff becomes more desperate to find out what has happened in the Thorwald apartment. Unable to explore the apartment himself, Lisa volunteers to sneak in and look for Mrs. Thorwald's wedding ring. This is the first moment in the film where Jeff is as in awe of Lisa as everyone else seems to be. As Lisa returns from delivering a note to Thorwald's apartment, she asks about his reaction. Rather than giving Jeffries a verbal response, Hitchcock uses a reaction shot of Jeff's gleeful admiration of Lisa to imply firstly his newly invigorated attraction to her, but also that he sees Lisa as representing the adventurous, masculine ideal he once worshiped. The audience then witnesses Lisa scaling fire escapes, hanging from windows, and confronting Thorwald head on. Before sending her on, Jeff says, "We scared him once, maybe we can scare him again" (*Rear Window* 01:32:32). He then rather self-consciously points out that his use of "we" is not exactly fair. Lisa is doing all of the hero work, while he merely observes from a distance. Jeff's identity is now being further attached to the actions of Lisa, shifting his prior apathy towards her to admiration.

Because Jefferies's passive state has kept him from fulfilling his patriarchal role, he must take on a new identity to uphold the visage of masculine authority he can no longer fulfill. In the final confrontation with Thorwald, Jeff's identity as the active, masculine hero is further stricken from him as he physically becomes a tool by which the action takes place. When Jeff uses flash

bulbs to blind Thorwald as he approaches, Hitchcock completes a motif that the rest of the film has been establishing: turning Jefferies into a camera (*Rear Window* 01:47:12). The film depicts him using cameras and lenses to view the action, but his use of the flash bulbs makes him no longer the one in control of the camera but a physical substitute for it as well. No longer is Jefferies able to identify as the patriarchal man, wielding the camera at his own behest, but now he is the tool that must be pointed toward its intended purpose. Even in this, Jeff's passivity is further reinforced when Thorwald throws him out the window, breaking his other leg and confirming his inferiority. In this, the cyclical nature of masculine identity performance is recontextualized: Jefferies resents his current status in the patriarchal order and seeks to overcome this by adopting a new means of identifying, only for his remaining power to be further stolen from him and his inferiority reinforced.

Notably, after the conflict with Thorwald is resolved, Jefferies has still not conquered Lisa's femininity. The ending sequence of the film shows Jeff asleep in his wheelchair, both legs in casts, while Lisa lounges in jeans, opening a copy of *Harper's Bazaar* when she knows he cannot see (*Rear Window* 01:51:36). In a rather progressive use of costuming, Lisa's pants give her more mobility than the dresses she wore before—and even more than Jefferies in his double cast. Modleski writes, "the woman is continually shown to be physically superior to the hero" (72). Also, her interest in fashion is not bested by his desire for her to become adventurous. The audience sees her put down a Himalayan travel guide to return to her fashion magazine (01:52:00). Here, the film appears to be affirming that the feminine identity that Jefferies takes on is in fact able to conquer his own inferiority. Whereas Jeff is punished by losing his authoritative role, Lisa is more importantly rewarded with her agency, taken back from the now defunct patriarchy. The feminine ideal has replaced the masculine ideal and can now exist

uninhibited, this being the dynamic central to the sexual commentary of *Rear Window* and will serve as a useful comparison for analysis of Hitchcock's other works.

Just as *Rear Window* affirms the masculine hero's need to compensate for his inferiority by identifying with a woman, then so does *Vertigo*, but to an even darker effect. Hitchcock's 1958 tour de force follows Scottie, a former detective who was made to quit the force when his vertigo kept him from saving a fellow officer from falling to his death. Scottie is then hired by Gavin Elster to investigate his wife's strange activity. Scottie follows Elster's wife, Madeleine, and falls in love with her, but his vertigo yields him unable to keep Madeleine from jumping to her death. Later, in his grieving of Madeleine, Scottie encounters Judy, a woman with remarkable resemblance to his former love. In pursuing Judy, Scottie discovers that she had been in fact hired by Elster to play his wife in a complicated scheme to cover up his real wife's murder and position Scottie as the witness to her staged death. In revenge and a desire to reclaim his power, Scottie takes Judy back to the scene of Madeleine's death, but now Judy accidentally falls and dies.

Vertigo establishes Scottie's need to assume a new identity by consigning him to an inferior position. Scottie, a supposed member of the patriarchal order, has his strength and agency taken from him. His injury and condition of vertigo remove him from his status as an authority figure. He is constricted by wearing a back brace that makes him physically uncomfortable. Scottie resents his helpless state, exclaiming, "Tomorrow will be the day. . . . I'll be able to scratch myself like anybody else tomorrow. . . . I'll be a free--a free man!" (*Vertigo* 00:05:20). This places him in a similar situation to Jefferies from *Rear Window*. As Schneider puts it: "He was strong and brave once, but now he is an invalid, an impotent hobbler. He longs for freedom, but is dragged down by resignation, guilt, . . . and mundaneness" (95). In the same

way Jefferies's debilitated state exposed his need for a new identity, Scottie's resentment of his own physical condition makes him a prime candidate for the same masculine identity formation cycle seen in *Rear Window.*

Vertigo portrays this concept of identity performance in two instances. The first is in Scottie's identification with Madeleine and transformation of Judy into a form he desires. Scottie takes hold of the opportunity to display authority when Elster hires him to follow Madeleine. Through her character (and therefore Judy's as well), he builds a new significance, by which he attempts to make his own. When Madeleine and Scottie embrace near the bell tower, he implores her, "No one possesses you" (*Vertigo* 01:14:54). In truth, if anyone seems to be possessed, it is Scottie by his obsession with Madeleine. Scottie loses all semblance of his own identity, demonstrated in the dream sequence following Madeleine's death. In a visual callback to the opening credits of the film, Hitchcock and graphic designer Saul Bass replace the unidentified female face surrounded in spirals that introduced the film (00:00:46) with Scottie's disembodied head (01:25:06). This, along with the previous dialogue, suggests that Scottie is undergoing a kind of identity crisis. He, once being a figure of patriarchal authority, loses himself within the psychology of a woman, now lacking an identity in the same way as the woman central to his own obsession. As Cohen states, "What appears to be propelling the protagonist in this film is the sudden recognition of a 'lack' in himself. . . . Once that recognition is experienced, Scottie . . . seeks a relationship that . . . includes a desire . . . for self-revision" (138). In his relationships to Madeleine and then Judy, the audience is forced to witness Scottie morph his own personal identity at the same time that he molds Judy into his own creation. When Scottie and Judy argue over the lengths to which she must be transformed, Scottie insists that such attributes like her hair color "can't matter" to her as much as they matter to him (01:51:03). Scottie is suggesting

that his demand to turn Judy into Madeleine is no longer as important to her, the one actually being transformed, as it is to him, the one doing the transforming. In this, Scottie is not just recreating Madeleine from Judy, but he is also recreating himself into the authoritative figure, the one who determines his own identity, through the subjugation of his feminine ideal onto another.

This leads to the second instance of identity performance: Scottie wishes to imitate the masculine superiority he encounters in Elster. When Scottie first meets with Elster, his former schoolmate reflects upon the days when men had "power, the freedom" to make their own way (*Vertigo* 00:12:20). Elster remarks that these attributes are fading from relevance. Scottie can relate to this loss of power and freedom. His status as detective and his debilitating condition keep him from achieving this superior form of the American dream. In a sense, when Elster offers him the responsibility to look after Madeleine, Scottie is also being offered a chance to hold the power and freedom that Gavin holds. He is the masculine ideal upon which Scottie's actions will be compared. As Scottie follows Madeleine, he mimics the role of husband, protector, and superior Gavin more naturally would. This dynamic is deepened in the second half of the film. Whereas, initially, Elster made Judy up to be like Madeleine, now Scottie is making Judy up to be like Madeleine. In this case, Scottie is performing his masculinity to match that of Gavin's. In discussing the ways Scottie transforms his own identity, the audience sees him both wrap himself up in the feminine identity of Madeleine and the superior masculine identity of Elster. Through the presence of both dynamics, Hitchcock is proposing that the two are not mutually exclusive. *Vertigo* displays the danger of ascribing meaning to masculine strength while also undermining masculine authority by giving female identity incredible power over men, as also seen in *Rear Window*.

As the two previous films suggest, this identity performance is cyclic in nature. Scottie's identity performance in both Madeleine and Elster is proven faulty at the film's conclusion. As Scottie leads the terrified Judy up the clock tower, he makes it plain that he sees his role in Elster's scheme for what it is. He screams at her, "Why did you pick on me? . . . I was the setup! I was the made-to-order witness!" (*Vertigo* 02:05:22). In discovering Madeleine's false identity, Scottie must confront his subservient status as Elster's pawn. He can no longer imitate Elster if he is the tool by which Elster now achieves his power and freedom. He also is confronted with the artificiality of his identification with Madeleine. Madeleine is no longer, and therefore never was, a real person for him to cling to. As Modleski writes, "This femininity is in fact a matter of external trappings . . . without essence. . . . For if woman, who is posited as she whom man must know and possess in order to guarantee . . . his identity, does not exist, then . . . he does not exist either" (92). When Scottie is confronted both by his submissiveness in Elster's scheme and in his own nothingness ascribed to his identifying with the false Madeleine, he is left in the same existential abyss he found himself in at the beginning of the film. He is a man who has no identity, authority, or strength. Hitchcock captures this both in the structure of *Vertigo* (i.e., the repetition of the bell-tower sequences, once with Madeleine and again with Judy) and also in the final shot of Scottie, looking helplessly down at the ground (02:08:00). Scottie may no longer be fighting his vertigo, but he has lost everything else in the process. The bells ringing indicate not only Judy's death but Scottie's consignment to a fate just as strong as death: utter meaninglessness.

Rear Window and *Vertigo* are both cinematic achievements in the filmography of the great Alfred Hitchcock. The two films explore the psychology of men who become outsiders. In doing so, Hitchcock traverses their futile attempts to regain superiority through identity

formation, both in an imaginary ideal man and the idealized woman. For Hitchcock's characters, the natural conclusion to this cycle is to affirm their inferior status and uphold the unreachability of the patriarchal standard they aspire to. Here, Hitchcock posits a radically transformative depiction of the patriarchy. If the patriarchy is unattainable for the men who belong to it, then it cannot be as superior as it claims to be. In studying Hitchcock's depiction of gender dynamics, this reading of masculine psychology proves fruitful in giving both his female characters more agency and also undercutting the authority his male characters demand. By doing this, Hitchcock prompts the male audience to grab on to this cynical reading of patriarchal power, questioning whether his male characters can ever truly ascend the hierarchy of male dominance.

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Essay

Greg Young

Queer Turns Killer:

Violence and Sexuality in Hitchcock's *Rebecca* and *Shadow of a Doubt*

Any newcomer to the cinematic work of Alfred Hitchcock is sure to be struck by the filmmaker's near obsession with the intersection between sexuality and violence. From his early career on, Hitchcock indulges in a dark, vulgar, even at times pulpy fascination with how sexual impulses motivate antisocial behavior. While on the surface many of his films explore this conflict through the circumstances of heterosexual men and women, if one is willing to accept alternate readings of even his earliest of films, homosexual undertones present themselves among some of Hitchcock's most intimidating antagonists. When discerning the sexual power dynamics present in the films of Alfred Hitchcock, one must not neglect the existence of the queer dynamic. So, the question arises: In the cinema of Hitchcock, how is heterosexual violence distinguished from queer violence? As demonstrated in the films *Rebecca* (1940) and *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), Hitchcock's usual ambivalent depictions of women caught in patriarchal power struggles translates to the realized violence enacted by the films' queer-coded characters, Mrs. Danvers and Uncle Charlie, respectively. In this, Hitchcock's cinema explores a new dimension between violent behavior and sexuality: that queer violence is just as much a threat to patriarchal power as femininity.

To start chronologically, dissecting the sexuality of *Rebecca*'s Mrs. Danvers provides some fascinating ideas to explore. While the obvious interpretation of her character is that of a married or perhaps widowed woman, given her title of "Mrs.," there exists enough subtext to yield a scholarly consensus that she possesses queer qualities. Gesine Wegner points out that the

character is introduced alongside the other staff of Manderley, not at the far side of the room with her fellow female maids wearing white but joining the male staff on the other side of the room dressed in a similar black attire (Wegner 82). This blocking suggests that Mrs. Danvers is not only unlike her fellow female staff, but also that her presence among the men serves as a symbol of the complicated gender dynamics the film will continue to explore.

To further elaborate this point, *Rebecca* demonstrates the psychoanalytic understanding of female identification during sexual development. Tania Modleski demonstrates this by invoking Freud's theory of the bisexual nature of female maturation (49). She argues that *Rebecca* portrays a child (the new Mrs. de Winter) as she must learn to separate herself from her sexual desire for the mother (Rebecca) and grow into her heteronormative status as Maxim's wife (49). It is to be argued that this same conflict presents itself in Mrs. Danvers's obsession with her late mistress. If one can say that the viewer follows the film's protagonist through her psychosexual development, then it follows that Mrs. Danvers has completed her own. And as Modleski writes, ". . . the two desires cannot coexist: the desire for the mother impedes the progress of the heterosexual union" (49). As the heroine struggles to put aside her bisexual affection for Rebecca, Mrs. Danvers embraces it. Mrs. Danvers has completed her sexual maturation, but her attachment to Rebecca demonstrates her failure to achieve heteronormativity.

Much of the protagonist's inner anxiety is brought about by her overwhelming fear of Mrs. Danvers' scrutiny. In a sense, Mrs. Danvers employs a distinctly matriarchal gaze on the young Mrs. de Winter. Her constant presence and voyeuristic interactions with the young female protagonist place her in a typically male role— that being the one who looks (Mulvey 270). As opposed to Mulvey's analysis of the gaze as a symbol of patriarchal desire, Mrs. Danvers's wielding of the gaze suggests her own desire to admire the female's "to-be-looked-at-ness"

(270). In conjunction with this, in the scene where Mrs. Danvers presents Mrs. de Winter with Rebecca's bedroom, the film not only depicts her admiring the deceased's "delicate" undergarments and nightgowns, but also Rebecca herself briefly possesses the camera as its movements mimic her own nightly routine. Mrs. Danvers describes her meticulous regimen for taking care of Rebecca as the camera itself takes Rebecca's position (01:10:36). In this moment, not only is Hitchcock subverting the typically male perspective of the camera by giving it the life of a female, but Mrs. Danvers's attention toward the personified camera makes the audience consciously aware of the female's gaze turned back at them. In this way, Mrs. Danvers's wielding of the gaze itself suggests an implicit sexual desire for women, which will be used to discomfort the heteronormative male audience.

Mrs. Danvers's queerness distinguishes her acts of violence from those committed by the film's heterosexual antagonists. In an early scene, the new Mrs. de Winter is startled by Mrs. Danvers's unprompted arrival outside her door (*Rebecca* 00:40:07). She dresses in all black and arrives without a sound; Hitchcock uses a quick cut to surprise the audience with her presence just as much as the young woman is. Her ghostly movements and omnipresence evoke a fear in the protagonist unmatched by any (living) character. This suggests Mrs. Danvers stands in firm opposition to the well-being of not only Mrs. de Winter's sanity, but also her successful marriage to Maxim. Mrs. Danvers demonstrates this best when she convinces the heroine to dress up in the same outfit the late Rebecca had once worn for the costume ball (*Rebecca* 01:17:10*)*. She does this to deliberately disrupt her already fragile marriage to Maxim, knowing how much the appearance of the protagonist will upset him, and in turn hurt the young Mrs. de Winter. Her continual sabotaging of the budding marriage builds when she tries to convince her to commit

suicide by jumping from the heights of Manderley and finally culminates when she burns Manderley to the ground in the film's final sequence.

So, what differentiates these acts of violence from those committed by the film's heterosexual antagonists? *Rebecca* includes both heterosexual and homosexual women subverting the patriarchy. The titular character's actions against Maxim can be considered as nothing but castrating, and Mrs. Danvers's idolization of Rebecca motivates continuing this castration when the former is no longer present. In the film's climactic scene, as Mrs. Danvers burns Manderley to the ground (*Rebecca* 02:08:41), her actions are her and Rebecca's final act of castration against the family. So, when Rebecca taunts Maxim with her sexual independence, Maxim is tortured, but the patriarchal structures of his success still stand. However, when Mrs. Danvers acts violently against Maxim, his patriarchal security is utterly demolished. If a man's castration anxiety can be provoked by heterosexual women, then he is nearly conquered by the homosexual woman's not only lack of the phallus, but more so her lack of sexual desire for it. It is important to recognize that by enacting this violent overthrow of the patriarchy, Mrs. Danvers presents herself as above the limits of the patriarchy both literally, as she burns Manderley down from the second floor (02:09:26), but also in her distinct disregard for male supervision (i.e., her seemingly absent husband). The queer character's assumed independence from the patriarchal male threatens him, and as one will see by analyzing *Shadow of a Doubt*, will continue to be a motivating force behind the violent actions of Hitchcock's queer villains.

In understanding Uncle Charlie's sexuality, his actions can be used to further explore how Hitchcock portrays queer violence. Drawing on the work of Hitchcock scholar David Greven, several aspects of his character serve to complicate his sexual expression. First, his bachelor status and dress connect Uncle Charlie to the Wildean dandy, a homosexual male

character whose charm, singleness, and disposition for a sharp wardrobe is a common reference among queer theorists (Greven 58). Also, his constant smoking of a cigar can be interpreted as phallic in nature, implying Uncle Charlie's willingness to subvert the sexual norm and wield his sexuality in the face of others (*Shadow of a Doubt)*.

The dialogue of the film also suggests, often through innuendo, that Uncle Charlie possesses certain traits that would not be accepted in the small town of Santa Rosa. When young Charlie rather seductively posits Uncle Charlie in the kitchen about how "inside … somewhere, there's something nobody knows about. Something secret, wonderful," Hitchcock cuts to a medium-close shot of a pensive Uncle Charlie. (*Shadow of a Doubt* 00:24:38). The edit effectively communicates not only his fearful reaction to his niece's prying dialogue, but also suggests that young Charlie is on the verge of discovering his terribly dark secret. The overall incestuous nature of their interactions codes the scene as inherently sexual and adds a new dimension to how the audience will interpret what kinds of secrets Uncle Charlie hides. Of course, that secret is two-fold: first, that he is a murderer on the lam; and second, that his sexual identity is not what it seems. And as Greven points out, incestual relationships often "function as a standin for homosexuality when the latter subject could not be explicated," just as was the case under the 1940s Production Code (59). Given that homosexual characters were forbidden textual representation in film, *Shadow of a Doubt* makes Uncle Charlie's sexuality subtextual.

Just as Mrs. Danvers was analyzed through Freudian psychosexual development, a similar construction is useful for analyzing young Charlie's development. In many ways, *Shadow of a Doubt* presents itself as a coming-of-age story for the female protagonist insofar as it demonstrates the protagonist's journey from innocent childhood to jaded maturity. The question now arises as to who stands in as her motherly figure. Obviously, her actual mother is present,

but the film is much more interested in her longing to resemble her uncle. Hitchcock establishes this dynamic in the characters' introductions. In two nearly adjacent scenes, the audience encounters in one instance the camera dollying in to meet Uncle Charlie lying in bed (00:02:37), and yet again when young Charlie is introduced while occupying a similar posture and nearly identical framing (00:10:20). Visually, they have been established as two sides of the same coin, with the younger aspiring to fulfill her connection to the older. So, if Uncle Charlie serves as young Charlie's mother figure in her psychosexual development, the audience can nearly confirm the incestuous overtones of their interactions, and in turn draw a logical line from one instance of sexual mystification to another—Uncle Charlie's undefined sexuality. By placing a male center to the psychosexual development of the female character, the audience is left unsure whether to characterize him by his aesthetically patriarchal traits or by his inversely queer relation to a maturing female and the world at large.

As Uncle Charlie masquerades throughout the suburban Santa Rosa, his facade slowly slips away to reveal both his sexuality and his inclination for violence. He distinguishes himself from the traditional heterosexual men around him, such as Mr. Newton and Mr. Hawkins, by actually acting on his violent impulses. While in one moment Mr. Newton and Mr. Hawkins will dote openly about grisly murders, Mr. Newton finds Uncle Charlie's nihilistic musings on society disturbing. When the Charlies meet Mr. Newton at the bank, Uncle Charlie unapologetically humors himself by exclaiming, "We all know what banks are! Looks alright to an outsider, but we all know what goes on when the doors are locked" (00:40:54). Uncle Charlie amuses himself by accusing Mr. Newton of wrongdoing and Mr. Newton is offended. But when he contemplates his conceptions for evildoing with Mr. Hawkins, all is well. In fact, it seems Uncle Charlie believes only he is capable of pointing out the irony in their situations, which is

demonstrated when he exclaims, “Can’t fool me though. . . . The whole world is a joke to me” (00:40:55). Hitchcock plays with this distinction between heterosexual and queer men by demonstrating that where the former merely finds violence fascinating when contained to fantasy, the queer man sees himself fully capable of that same violent behavior and actively indulges in it.

If both Mrs. Danvers and Uncle Charlie are queer antagonists, synthesizing their distinct representations achieves a greater understanding of Hitchcock’s auteurism. The inclusion of both straight female antagonists and queer antagonists demonstrates how patriarchal anxiety for sexual diversity compounds across both gender and sexual orientation lines. Heterosexual antagonists exist alongside the previously discussed queer antagonists, and often pursue allyship. Rebecca achieves her castration of Maxim with the full support of Mrs. Danvers. Mrs. Danvers then continues to torture the heterosexual male after Rebecca has passed on, even at points seducing the new Mrs. de Winter to join her admiration for the late Mrs. de Winter (*Rebecca* 01:11:21). In analyzing these two queer antagonists in *Rebecca,* Young Charlie opposes the patriarchy through her disdain for the social dynamics that she is expected to fit into, and Uncle Charlie’s attempts to keep her from exposing his darkness suggest he wants her to be his ally (*Shadow of a Doubt* 00:32:13). But as Greven points out, this allegiance between queer and female antagonists relies on “work[ing] together” (55). If they fail to do so, they will remain “radically opposed” (55). So, if queer characters in Hitchcock’s films must seek fidelity with the feminine, they will soon find that trust to be volatile. When Rebecca’s sexual independence, symbolized by her unfaithful pregnancy, renders itself literally cancerous (*Rebecca* 02:03:07), and when young Charlie seeks to expose Uncle Charlie’s evil, the union is broken. Mrs. Danvers burns down Manderley, Rebecca’s final lasting symbol of status. Uncle Charlie attempts to

murder his niece by locking her in the garage with a running car (*Shadow of a Doubt* 01:34:43). Uncle Charlie's motivation for why his victims are wealthy widows has to do with the fragile concordance between the queer and the feminine. The ability of wealthy women to benefit from the patriarchy while remaining independent of its sexual constraints laughs in the face of queer men who are completely unable to express their sexual identity freely. If Hitchcock uses females to upset patriarchal power structures, he uses queer characters to upset both the patriarchy and the feminist rebellion within it.

The cinema of Alfred Hitchcock presents an incredibly complex perspective of the connection between sexual orientation and violence. Building off an established understanding of Hitchcock's ambivalent treatment of women, viewers of his films can just as readily accept a certain ambivalence to queer characters. In *Rebecca*, Mrs. Danvers's queerness is given exceptional power both in service of female subversive behavior and independent of it. Uncle Charlie in *Shadow of a Doubt* finds opposition both from those who exist within the patriarchy and those who wish to escape it. In both films, instances of the feminine and queer finding common ground in their pursuit of tearing down male power structures is broken in favor of the queer character taking actions into their own hands. All this is to say, as a contemporary viewer of Hitchcock's cinema, one should not run from this complicated depiction of queer characters, but rather use it to deepen their understanding of the patriarchal aversion to both the feminine and the queer.

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Poetry

Joanna Blaine

Traces of Cleopatra

Mother's perfume masks the faint smell of
cigarettes in an ashtray *like a burnished throne*
on the water. She grips onto the staircase banister
like it will balance her from a *greater storm*.

Her loose sweater hides the ivory skin
beaten gold, purple and bruised. The ghost
of his fingerprints clutch at her throat,
choking out his former *soft and gentle speech*.

Mother calmly smooths her newly torn skirt,
preparing an apology on her lips.
She takes each hardwood stair hesitantly.
His command is *her religion*, she obeys.

Mother stands in front of the heavy door,
attempting to gather her *lost breath*.
The eleven steady chimes of our wooden clock
keeps rhythm with Mother's quiet knocks.

From inside, *a strange, invisible*
voice permits her to enter.
When Mother silently slips inside the room,
I am left only with the faint trace of cheap perfume.

Poetry

Sarah Chew

The Paper-Making

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1. Introduction
"Paper is a sheet material consisting of overlapping vegetable fibers that bond together to form a compact mat."

Start with a net, fish for dead rags.
See what pulp we can stir (before we forget that it's there).
Lay you out flat, clothe you with such felt
As you had when you bled,
And swear we're just scraping off wear.
The layer will wait while you undress your past
For the part. Pounds and pounds of sticky conceit
Will thin under the steadfast screw we apply.
We'll open and close the blinds to the sun,
Hang your husk, and trust everything fuses in time.

2. Paper Manufacture
"Plant or textile fibers prepared in this way are still not suitable for papermaking; they need mechanical treatment... stamping mills involved pounding the wet fibers with large wooden hammers shod with nails."

Next we extract from you
Grapes of wrath. Slick-soled, ink-dark feet
Or fists, no act of oblivion we beat
And baste the dark past till it bleeds its keep.
In the press we (are only allowed to be first-person to-day,
For tomorrow we die and are *they*)
Beat and bleach those hairy strands
Till you glide through our hands, ready to ride
Nail-shod knights on you, their page.
The flax you were when you grew
Has rotted and slaked and washed away the facts,
And now you are new. I wonder if our heroes
Would know themselves in our books. We think, as we
Shed our nails, we've just polished their boots.

3. Watermarks
"The date in a countermark must be treated with as much caution as any other mark in a sheet."

To bind you at last is to lie, and make graven the lines
That we heard by the hearth from the bard.
Did they really believe this stuff? your marked man will say,
Sifting signs and crests sent through some dot com,
Marveling that gods once talked. Here
Stuff becomes scraps (paper is paranoid) and
Tales become traps (ink is incredulous).
All we know we were told, but given a turn to tell,
We shorten the corner, swing over the date.
Once we fashion ourselves into spindles and cracks,
This historical shrug will be red-letter taped.
Words will live longer than our names, our hurts,
Our hearts, fate decrees: we bed with our lies.

4. Characteristics
"Initial investigation can be performed by holding the sheet up to a diffuse light source and viewing it by glancing illumination."

When you are took from our making,
Don't let them look with the sun in their eyes, like
They'd dare to go blind, or you'll be raveled right
Down to your mold. The link-chains of your patron
Are stretched on your back, still intact, though
It's long since you carried their weight. *Be kind,*
Not curious, cause the first might just cure, but
This learning with hands will turn you out scratched.
They will know: you were loved unto war. By scars
You were sworn. You centered the star, gouged the moon,
Revoluted the earth. You threw tables and change
Out of church, like you thought they'd indulge,
And asked to live unscathed? You were born
Shaken and scraped, so you bore in kind. Inked. Signed.

Poetry

Hannah Collins

The Stoker's Indecent *Affaire de Coeur*

Shovel the dry charcoal and toss it into
the ashy furnace. Let the dust that billows into the air
cloud everything
Sober.
Feed the flames with your lust, and watch
the smoke ascend
in cushions of carbon.
The whistle blows louder,
the train moves faster,
the wheels a blur of hypnotic
whirling like
caffeinated windmills in a hurricane.
The miles muddle the grass and trees, a
Monet left out in the rain. The clanking
metal rails screech
to slow, the approaching
buffer stop twinges your swelling
urge for impact.
You are thirsty
for speed,
for wind,
for destruction.
Nothing can stop the craving
for contact, the longing
to crash into the guardrails with
heavy and sharp wheels digging
into the soft dirt,
to kiss each blade of grass
then bury deep within
the soil. You don't care if it hurts;
the sacrifice for an uncontrollable affair is worth
mountains of pain.

Poetry

Edie Smith

Make Use of Time

Gather ye rose-buds while ye may

Grasp the maple-leaves as they come,
  Each Day few will be falling;
These chances that presently hum,
  Will swiftly finish calling.

The world's scale of time, a shadow,
  With haste she will be changing,
The quicker will her hour be gone,
  And closer she's to fading.

That sound is best made from the earth,
  When scent and shade are fresher;
But waiting, for bliss, and for mirth,
  Times still succeed the former.

Then waver not, but snatch each blade,
  And when you can, be merry;
For keeping still without life's trade,
  You'll be forever dreary.

Personal Narrative

Anonymous

Lighter Equals Faster:

A Rhetorical Approach to the Culture of Female Distance Running[5]

Part One: Isolation in Undefined Pressure of Varsity Competition

Often, runners start early. Middle school athletes have the advantage of youth, and beginning an endurance sport before puberty works to their advantage. They can run easily because they have endless energy and no extra weight to carry. As female athletes hit puberty, though, their bodies change, needing more fuel and rest, adding weight in new places, throwing everything off-kilter. Male runners simply hit their growth spurt and enjoy stronger bodies, faster metabolisms, and faster times. Females, though, usually hit a plateau or even a significant slowing in their times as their bodies change. Commentators on the sport often point this out, for when a young superstar, usually between seventh and ninth grade, starts winning races, they know that her victory is usually short-lived. Many articles, on sites like Runnerspace or Milesplit, will end profile pieces about these young athletes with the question, "She's good now, but will she make it through puberty?"

As female runners go through puberty and begin menstruation, another potential problem arises. The issue of the Triad, a phenomenon specific to female athletes but rarely spoken about, affects many female runners. It is composed of three interdependent components: "disordered eating, amenorrhea, and osteoporosis" (Tortsviet 184). When girls start their period, blood flow

[5] Names, locations, and identifying characteristics in the narrative have been changed to protect the privacy of those mentioned. All academic research and quoted articles are untouched.

throughout the body becomes more crucial to body functions. Blood delivers oxygen to the muscles and bones, aiding in healing and recovery. Ferrous iron, or iron carrying oxygen in the blood, is necessary to carry out this healing function. Iron can only be gained through supplements, diet, and, in extreme cases, infusion. This is where the disordered eating component of the Triad comes in; if these young, growing women continue their intense exercise regimens without properly fueling, it can lead to low iron, which leads to fatigue and often injury. This manifests through amenorrhea, or the loss of period.

The Triad leads to another complication: injury. Usually, if a high school runner gets injured, she is in between her sophomore and senior year. Because these are the prime years of body development, athletes this age are particularly prone to injury and suffering from the Triad, and injuries can sideline athletes during prime collegiate recruiting years. It is best to run the fastest times in the fall and spring of junior year, when coaches are scouting for the next batch of recruits. If an athlete does not peak until she is in her senior year, many doors close and coaches will have already filled their roster and allocated all of their scholarship money.

Finally, female runners endure one more complication due to puberty: disordered eating and problems with mental health. Distance running, like many other endurance sports, is what is considered by scholars a "leanness sport." This means that the smaller an athlete is, the less she has to carry with her as she runs. A study in 2017 found that runners add 2.4 seconds to every mile per extra pound they carried (Hutchinson). Of course, coaches and athletes alike read that article and immediately began the quest to lose as much extra weight as possible, trying to achieve the ideal "running weight" now that it was scientifically proven that "lighter equals faster." A 2015 study found that more than "60% of elite athletes from leanness-focused sports reported pressure from coaches concerning body shape" (Kong 142). This obsession with

looking thin, by both the athlete and her coaches, can easily cause her to under-fuel to achieve the elusive ideal runner's body. It works—for a while. Runners with leaner bodies often race faster. But without even realizing it, they are breaking down their bones and exhausting themselves in the process. Their success is short-lived when they are sidelined in injury. Unsurprisingly, in a 2005 study, scholars found that "more athletes competing in leanness sports… were classified at being at risk of the Triad as compared with athletes competing in nonleanness sports" (Tortsviet 185). When leanness is reported to ensure a better performance, losing weight becomes a goal synonymous with getting faster. This goal of losing weight can often result in unhealthy habits to achieve running and aesthetic goals.

The Triad, though, is not a well-known concept discussed among high school teams. For female runners struggling with injury, disordered eating, body changes, and poor mental health, there are little resources available through their school's athletic program. Running is not a high priority in high school athletics, with football and basketball taking most of the athletic funding. Very few high schools, if any, offer sports-specific psychologists or resources just for athletes. Noticing these problems, then, falls on the shoulders of the coach. Fixing these problems is a task that many coaches are not equipped or comfortable enough to do. This leaves many struggling athletes isolated, uninformed, confused, and depressed.

Ultimately, the process of growth as a female runner is a pressure-packed, appearance-focused environment that reduces young women to their performance. There is much joy in high school running, between the time with teammates, the accomplishment of getting faster, and the thrill of victory. And yet, many athletes are miserable, exhausted, anxious, and lonely. As scholars found, "The prevalence of eating disorders was higher in sports emphasizing leanness or a specific weight than in sports where these are less important" (Sundgot-Borgen 414).

Compared with the control group, “eating disordered athletes began both sports-specific training and dieting earlier, and felt that puberty occurred too early for optimal performance” (Sundgot-Borgen 414). When normal body functionality becomes the enemy, these young women suffer physically and mentally.

Part Two: Coming of Age in a Time of Injury and Confusion

I started distance running during track season of sixth grade. Experiencing some success, I was asked by the varsity coach to join the varsity cross country squad in the fall of seventh grade at twelve years old. The team had won State two years prior, and I remember attending the school-wide pep rally to celebrate our state champions, in awe of these tall, beautiful, accomplished women. I enjoyed being able to compete ruthlessly, looking up to the seasoned seniors, the three remaining members of the state championship team. It was intimidating, racing these older athletes as a ninety-pound twelve-year-old. My dad encouraged me, though, saying, “The bigger they are, the harder they fall.” I raced fine, running as the fifth runner on the team. I scored at the State meet, finally breaking the twenty-one-minute barrier by 14 seconds. While my teammates wore spikes, light running cleats made specifically for racing, I wore my ratty Reeboks my mom got me for P.E. class. Even though my shoes were clunky, even though I barely knew anything about the sport, I felt light and free as I raced.

I got fast. Over the next two years of cross country and track, I collected podium finishes, personal records, and Milesplit articles. I dreamed about crossing the finish line as a state champion. I felt optimistic, with my whole high school career ahead of me. The summer before sophomore year, though, I went for an x-ray on my foot because I had been dealing with some nagging pain for the past year. The joint on my second toe has almost completely dissolved from lack of blood flow and overuse and required surgery immediately. I was put in a boot and

sidelined for the summer. Surgery in June went well. But I was away from my team, bookending school with spin class before breakfast and physical therapy in the afternoons, then straight to the pool for an hour of laps or aqua jogging. I missed my team. I missed racing. I missed our Sunday morning long runs in the trails by my house, where we gathered with teams from around the city and logged our miles together, then congregated at my house where my mom had homemade biscuits and sizzling bacon ready.

I was exhausted. I cried on the physical therapy table, I cried in the shower, I cried before I fell asleep. I knew this was the year that runners hit puberty, and I was determined to keep the weight off, to stay in shape and ready to race the moment my doctor gave the all-clear. I was cleared to run in late October, right as we entered championship season for cross country. I hadn't run more than three miles in seven months. My dad, a former collegiate distance runner, volunteered to coach me. My first race was the district meet, of which I held the title for the last two years. I started the race, but something was off. I felt heavy and sluggish, every step an enormous effort. My dad was waiting with his stopwatch at the one-mile marker. Usually, I ran the first mile of a 5k in 5:45, but the time on the clock read 7:00. How was I running so slow? Why did this feel so difficult? I met my dad's eye as I ran past him, and he asked, in equal confusion, "What are you doing?" I just shook my head, too out of breath to respond, willing myself not to cry. The past two years, I had won my district titles with times in the nineteen-minute range. That morning, I ran twenty-four minutes. I was fourth on my team, behind my younger teammates who looked to me as their leader. It was humiliating and heartbreaking.

I spent the next five months in intense training, eating very little, running almost fifty miles a week, and doing core in the afternoons. Dad would get frustrated if I ate something too unhealthy or had too big of a meal after a workout, saying that it would negate all the work I just

did. Finally, in the second week of April, I stepped on the line of the district meet mile, feeling fit but frightened. My heart raced, knowing that I had to place fourth to advance to Regionals. I advanced, running 5:33, my personal record from eighth grade. Regionals, the next week, was a more difficult task. I was ranked fifth, one second behind the fourth-ranked runner. I had to go to state. I had never been more anxious in my life, feeling like my body was filled with nothing but cold air and angry, buzzing bees. I got third, running a 5:31. Two weeks later, I stepped onto the blue track in Bradenton, Florida, the legendary IMG athletics facility. It was a cool, golden evening, and I was euphoric. Finally running with excitement instead of anxiety, I ran an eleven-second PR (personal record), finishing seventh (a podium finish) with a time of 5:19. This is still my PR. My dad was the first person I hugged after I crossed the finish line. With all his support and coaching over the last few months, it was his victory as much as mine.

Junior year, I got better, but not good enough. I began looking at colleges where I could run, but the coaches I talked to said I needed at least an 18:45 5k to join their team. I ran 19:22. Track was equally uninspired, running low 5:20s all season but never dipping under the magic recruiting number of 5:15. I was running out of time. Senior year came too quickly, and my parents, who were helping me with my college search, were also getting more frantic. I ran slow in cross country, weighed down by the pressure to achieve my goal: get a walk-on position on my dream Big-12 university's cross-country team. I ran a PR of 19:10 but never broke into the eighteen-minute range, as the college coach had requested. Maybe if I could run sub-5:10 in track, they would still want me.

Right as track season started, I got plantar fasciitis. Every step was painful, and the physical therapy was not helping. I needed this season. I needed these workouts, and I was out of

time. I couldn't run, but if I maintained my fitness and got better, I might be able to recover enough to race in championship season.

I had three months until the deadline. My parents threw themselves into support roles: my dad writing pool workouts, my mom cooking from American Olympic 10k runner and elite marathoner Shalane Flanagan's cookbook, *Run Fast Eat Slow*. I developed an obsession, slipping into orthorexia, a disorder concerned with healthy fueling. Of course, I was still hungry, so I snacked outside of meals. My dad, sensing my dissatisfaction with my progress and feeling discouraged himself, set an ultimatum. He banned me from using my car and wallet so I wouldn't be tempted to go out to restaurants with my friends or purchase snacks, saying that he would return them when I lost ten pounds. The goal weight was the same as my race weight when I was sixteen. His logic was that if I looked how I did when I ran 5:19, I could run that fast again. The only problem was that I was eighteen, two inches taller, and unable to run. I was only 120 pounds at the time.

I didn't get better in time. I lost my final chance at becoming a state champion. Luckily, a coach from a slightly smaller, still D1 university took a chance on an injured athlete and allowed me to walk on to their team. The damage, though, had been done. I was constantly aware of the number on the scale, the width of my hips, the definition in my legs, the circumference of my arms. Now having to think about my weight and food intake, which was not an issue when I was a younger, lighter athlete, thoughts of my image consumed me.

Part Three: Entering the Arena: Collegiate Athletics

Collegiate athletics: the competition between every young woman who has learned the importance of leanness in regard to performance. Groups of former varsity top performers now have to relearn their place on a team while adjusting to an entirely different life. Away from

home, away from friends, mentors, thrown into the deep end, where only the strong stay afloat. These are the women that were able to overcome the literal sophomore slump, trade their injuries and puberty for a strong, defined adult body. It is terrifying and exhilarating.

But the pressure runs deeper than just the level of competition. While gaining more resources, more recognition, more experienced coaches, better training partners, and a facility equipped to increase performance, college athletics provide a supportive and well-funded environment, the opposite of high school. But with this comes an exchange. Gifts come with obligation; there is now pressure to perform because of scholarships. The program pays for the athlete's degree, so the athlete owes them results.

To get these results, collegiate athletes will go to extreme measures. Since high school, coaches and commentators alike drill into their athletes that "lighter equals faster." In a competitive environment, everything is an edge, especially a runner's diet. When all team members do the same workout regimen, food is an external factor that the athlete can control better than her teammates. Some programs outright tell athletes to lose weight, while others subtly hint at it. Very seldom do programs provide adequate resources to support athletes in their nutrition and mental health.

A group of female distance runners from Columbia University in New York City, comprised of current team members and alumni, published an article in 2021 regarding the disordered eating and mental health issues in their program. Team members worked together to discuss the issues they all struggled with silently, and then researched to make recommendations for how to reform the program to be more supportive of athletes with eating disorders. As clinically diagnosable mental health conditions, eating disorders require proper diagnosis and professional care. In the article, scholar Quatromoni defines eating disorders as "maladaptive or

unhealthy coping mechanisms," which anyone living in a high-stress environment is at risk of developing (Justice). Columbia athletes are at a heightened risk due to high-intensity pressure from their sports. The Columbia team therefore recommends a program similar to that at Boston University, which has a proactive awareness system. Proactive awareness systems are built from the ground up, steadily creating the infrastructure that provides support for athletes who may be dealing with these issues. At BU, Quatromoni established a referral system for at-risk athletes, a fully funded nutrition center, and monthly meetings with a multidisciplinary team to monitor athletes within the program for any concerns or early symptoms (Justice).

There is also the issue of collegiate uniforms in comparison to high school uniforms. In high school, female runners race in jerseys—thin tank tops with their school's name across the front— and spandex—tight, stretchy shorts, usually with a three-inch inseam. The lighter the fabric, the cooler the athlete stays, and many runners choose to exchange coverage for comfort, wearing breathable and thin clothing to compete. In college, this is taken a step further, with many collegiate female distance runners opting to wear bikini-style running shorts, referred to as "buns." These can create unneeded pressure to look a certain way, especially when an athlete steps on a track in a stadium full of people wearing basically her underwear. An athlete interviewed from the Columbia team said, "It's always interesting to put [the buns] on because you want to feel good on race day and then sometimes just putting on the uniform does the opposite" (Justice). This is a separate but adjacent issue of objectification of female athletes, because wearing buns as opposed to shorts makes no difference in performance. Some athletes do choose to race exclusively in shorts, but the rules in competition hold that the uniforms of all athletes from each team must match exactly or they will be disqualified. Some women have no choice but to compete in their underwear.

This multi-stream pressure combined with lack of resources can take a colossal toll on an athlete's mental health. In her 2020 study, scholar Rachel Taylor interviewed different NCAA Division I female runners, trying to get a clear picture on the effect collegiate running has on mental health. In her findings, Taylor concludes that "three overarching themes emerged, each with two sub-themes to further elaborate the intricacies and inconsistencies of motivation for these student-athletes, as well as the seriousness of how overwhelming and detrimental ED/DE [Eating Disorder/Disordered Eating] is. The themes are Becoming More Serious, Internal Conflict, and Support" (Taylor 2).

In her discussion, Taylor notes that the ironic aspect of understanding this desire to be more serious, to dive into running in order to gain a sense of power and control in their lives, is that it was met with immense struggle and heartbreak. Data "showed a strong level of internal conflict in the perspective of each participant. While each clung onto running as a sense of control, it simultaneously broke them; mentally, physically, or both" (Taylor 135). However, there were also moments "when the participants felt successful in running, and simply within the way they were able to maintain their [disordered eating]. This success was defined sometimes in the form of race times, weight loss, and the confirmation from teammates, coaches, and others on how they looked or how they were performing" (135). This feeling of success only prompted them to continue their disordered eating habits, being so focused on their goal that they could not comprehend the damage they were doing to themselves.

However, when they failed to perform as expected, or were told by coaches or athletic trainers that they could not maintain the weight they had lost, or that they needed to eat less, the disordered eating habits were not cured. Rather, they only persisted with an increased fervor. These conflicting desires were "heavily present in each of the participants' lives while

experiencing their [eating disorder], and overall, they each acknowledged that they would likely never be truly satisfied with themselves or reach the level they so deeply wanted to be" (Taylor 136). This acknowledgement did not necessarily mean they tried to heal their disordered eating, but rather led "to continued feelings of inadequacy, or simply, becoming burned out" (136). Many athletes do not finish all four years in their sport, with injuries or burnout or diminished mental health becoming too much of a burden. Resources geared specifically to prevent a culture that encourages disordered eating, as well as resources that help to treat these issues, are thus necessary for collegiate programs to adopt.

Part Four: The Anxious Imposter, Or, My Valiant Attempt to Sustain Misery While Simultaneously Needing Everyone to Like Me

My relationship with Elizabeth and Sarah is the greatest gift of my college experience. We met for the first time in June, before fall sports physicals and freshman orientation, the three new additions to the university's cross-country team. Both Elizabeth and Sarah are Alabama State champions, Elizabeth having raced at Nike High School Nationals and Sarah with a 3200m time an entire minute faster than mine. On paper, they were terrifying. At our first breakfast over honeyed biscuits and coffee, they were kind, gentle, and unassuming, and we awkwardly discussed our hobbies outside of running and what furniture we were bringing to our shared dorm. We began the season in August, sustaining 6:00a.m. practices and oppressive southern heat and humidity. I was so much slower than everyone, not at all prepared to enter the arena of collegiate athletics. The third week of practice, right before our first race, I fell on a run and broke my elbow as I tried to catch myself. I was secretly pleased that I had been sidelined: no one would be disappointed in my inadequate first performance. But my elbow healed, and I was expected to begin training again.

I didn't perform the way I could have. Workouts were twice as long as my high school training, and the athletes around me were all State champions or nationally ranked. Their muscles were lean and toned, their easy runs the same pace as my tempo workouts. But still, Elizabeth and Sarah treated me with love, encouraging me and making time both during and outside of practice fun. One afternoon, I had been assigned a solo workout by my coach: 20 x 400 meters, with warm up and cool down totaling eleven miles of work. In high school, I did four hundred repeats weekly, the maximum being twelve repetitions with two minutes of rest. Twenty laps around the track with the rest only a one-hundred-meter jog was insane. I stepped on the line, started my watch, and began the first repeat. My coach watched from the start line as I ran solitary loops. It began to steadily rain. At interval number six, I heard whooping from the opposite side of the track. I shook off my tired stupor and saw Sarah and Elizabeth huddled under an umbrella, cheering for me. They did not have to be there, and between studying and running, they had plenty of other things to do. But they knew how nervous I was for this workout, and their presence, cheering and laughing and joking and taking videos every time I passed them on the track, made the daunting workout seem feasible. They stayed until I was finished to congratulate me, and I treated them to hot chocolate afterwards.

On the inside, though, I was terribly anxious and afraid. As my mental health deteriorated, my ability to manage my anxiety also faltered. My control on other things slipped too: I slept almost thirteen hours a night and lost control of my eating, either eating too much or too little, and feeling guilty for every calorie I consumed. I began skipping runs because they were so stress-inducing, and since I wasn't a top performer, I slipped through the cracks. I got injured again, and instead of being disappointed I couldn't compete, I was relieved to be free from the pressure of performance.

I made myself useful in other ways. I baked biscuits with honey and made waffles with chocolate chips for my teammates after our Saturday morning long runs. No one noticed that I didn't eat anything myself. I cooked team dinners (catering for a hungry team of twenty-five all by yourself is a lot more difficult than you might think), I biked alongside them on their workouts, yelling out splits and playing the music they requested. I avoided my coach so they would not deliver the fateful line, "It isn't working out. You can't be on the team anymore." So, I made sure I was invaluable to the culture.

It caught up with me. After my first (and one of only two) collegiate race, the indoor mile in which I ran abysmally slow, Coach pulled me aside. Kindly, they explained to me that running these times was not sustainable, but they would allow me to keep working, hoping to help me with my goals and get better for next season. After the second race, which was equally embarrassing, they invited me to their office. "You are important to this team, but I know you are struggling. Would you like to act as the team manager instead of competing? You can still be on the team; you just would not have to race or work out. Instead, you can help me with administrative stuff, bike with the team, and travel to all the meets as part of the support staff." This was a Godsend. I could not leave and let my team down, so having an out that still allowed me to enjoy being a team member and stay with my friends was the perfect answer.

I held this position for a year. In the summer before my third and final year of college, I began evaluating my career goals, applying for internships, and studying for the LSAT. I would keep busy next semester, and thus my final solution: I do not have the time for the team anymore. I could leave with a valid excuse, and my friendships, with the benefit of two years, would remain. I could retire with dignity and finally rest.

Part Five: Hanging Up Your Shoes: Floating in the Limbo of Retirement

So, what happens to these women when they retire from collegiate athletics? How does an athlete, after dedicating years' worth of energy, work, and emotion to her sport just go back to normal life? How do they find identity when their sport is taken away, when this thing they've used to define themselves for so long is now no longer descriptive of them? Where do these ingrained lessons—defining their worth by their performance, their need for validation from coaches, their daily routine, the constant control of their nutrition, sleep, fitness, time, habits—apply now that they cannot be attributed to their sport?

In 2020, scholars conducted a study on retired NCAA DI athletes. The authors empirically tested an established eating disorder theoretical model with 218 former NCAA Division-I female collegiate athletes who had been retired for two to six years. In retirement, "participants completed measures of general sociocultural pressures related to body and appearance, thin-ideal internalization, body dissatisfaction, dietary restraint, negative affect, and bulimic symptomatology" (Barrett 492). They discovered that during retirement, these retired athletes "simultaneously move out from under the pressures and expectations that exist within the sport environment, and away from the high levels of training and more controlled eating that existed when they were active competitors" (496).

In retirement, athletes often undergo a decrease in fitness but also changes in physical stature, like weight gain or loss of muscle tone. These perfectly natural processes can "override the expected benefits of leaving the sport environment and its concomitant pressures," leading to further "decreases in body acceptance and increases in dissatisfaction with their appearance and physique" (Barrett 496). Retired athletes who experience this will "be more likely to engage in maladaptive behaviors, such as restrictive eating and compensatory behaviors (e.g., excessive

exercise)" (496). Ultimately, they found that this resulted in "an increase in athletes' engagement in dysfunctional eating, underscored by the cycle of binging and purging" (496). In retirement, disordered eating and body image has the serious potential to only get worse.

In my year as a retired athlete, I have barely entered the process of unlearning these ingrained messages. My anxiety, usually applied to my running performance and fitness, is now without an anchor, seeping into other areas of my life. While I was competing, I was so afraid of failing at my performance, of failing in the eyes of my coach or my team. With that source of fear gone, I don't know how to make the shift to being unafraid. Fear has made its home in my head for so many years, and now I don't know where to put it.

So, I found things to be afraid of. I don't want to lose my athletic body more than I already have. It has been such a pillar of my identity for my entire life. My high school coach and I ran through the trails by my house over my Senior year Christmas break, talking about their upcoming track season and what they expected their athletes to do. Our conversation settled into a comfortable lull, when they asked, "How have you stayed the same size without running 50 miles a week?" I laughed nervously, and jokingly answered, "Well, it helps to have an eating disorder!" Coach brushed it off, sensing that I didn't want to talk about it because the glaring truth shone through the humor.

But it has taken over every spare moment of my thoughts. I need some semblance of control, something that I feel like I am able to manage. And I can't manage my anxiety or my fear or my energy, so I manage my meals. Calories are the enemy, and hunger just means that I am getting closer to my goal. The goal is elusive, though. Will I finally be happy when I lose ten pounds? Will my anxiety disappear when I can fit into that dress from my sophomore year of high school? Will I finally be able to rest when I look like the girls on social media, or my runner

roommates, lean and toned, with sculpted abs and ballerina arms? Of course not. My mind is lying, and I need something to believe.

I was—and am—terrified of reaching out for help. I do not want to gain weight, I do not want to go to residential treatment, I do not want people to know my secret. And yet, I spoke with my mom about it when I was home from school (not quite voluntarily, but moms have a way of knowing when something is wrong). She cried a little but hugged me for a long time and promised to help. I accepted. At her urging, I told my partner. I told my dad. And most importantly, I am writing my story. Seeing it makes it more real. Writing it makes it more real. Sharing it makes it more real. That is not to say that stories only matter if they have an audience. Writing my story is instead a stripping down of the performance I have kept up for so long.

Recovery isn't linear. I've taken steps to heal, but my story is far from concluded. But being in the middle of an ongoing narrative is beautiful, for it gives me an opportunity to reach out while having done the heavy lifting of recognition and reflection. As Joan Didion said, "I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I see and what it means. What I want and what I fear" (Didion). I understand myself better because I have written about my experience. My parents, my partner, and my former teammates understand me better having read my work. And after months of trying to cure myself, I am finally starting treatment for my eating disorder next week.

I am not isolated anymore. The people around me remind me of the joy of running, the joy of cooking, the joy of morning-long runs followed by coffee and biscuits topped with pecans and drizzled with honey. The joy of gentle accountability. Recovery isn't linear. But it feels like a hug from my mom, and it tastes like biscuits with my roommates.

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Personal Narrative

Jennifer Ellis West, PhD

English Studies as Reading and Writing the World

For the students of English 398 at Samford University, Spring 2022

I have been teaching about women's experiences in literature and writing courses for nearly two decades now, and I have learned so much from students who have brought their questions, insights, and experiences to discussions of Janie's agency in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the particular terror of motherhood for enslaved women represented in *Beloved,* or the growing consciousness of the narrator of Marilynne Robinson's *Lila*. In my research, I study the representation of women's health and embodiment, and that path was, in many ways, determined by one particular experience of my own.

The semester I was finishing coursework in my Ph.D. program, I was still searching for a dissertation topic. Many of my peers had come in knowing exactly what they wanted to write about, but I'd always been interested in too many things, and I hadn't quite figured out where I wanted to settle. I cannot say I recommend this as a prescription for developing a research agenda, but that semester, I also learned that I was pregnant with my first child. As I began attending doctor's appointments, reading birth books, and talking to friends with kids, I found myself inundated with information that was shockingly new to me. Like most American women, I had not given much thought to childbirth until my own pregnancy. Here were questions about which I was, at twenty-eight years old, quite ignorant: what did it mean to give birth? What would happen to my body, to my sense of self? How had women in the past given birth? Most urgently, why had I not learned anything about giving birth before now?

Towards the middle of my second trimester, something happened that would alter the course of my academic trajectory. I went to campus late in the evening to get some things from my office. The afternoon had brought one of those torrential Louisiana rains, and the stairs and linoleum hallway leading to the basement of Allen Hall were slicked with water. I remember taking my hand off the stair rail to rest it on my slightly protruding stomach. Then, as I stepped into the hallway, I slipped, and I fell. I landed on my back, but because I was carrying an armload of books, I did not brace myself, and I hit the ground pretty hard. I got up, got what I needed from my office, and then drove home.

As I navigated the growing puddles along Baton Rouge's Lakeshore Drive, I started seeing flashes from a television show I had watched a few weeks earlier. In an episode of *Grey's Anatomy,* the main character—Meredith Grey—examines a pregnant woman who has fallen in her bathtub. As she performs the ultrasound, the woman and her husband are visibly ecstatic about the baby. Their apparent joy becomes the backdrop against which Meredith must deliver the tragic news: she cannot locate a heartbeat. The images that my mind conjured on my rainy drive home were those of the woman's birth—her body wracked with sobs as she delivers her dead infant. By the time I pulled into my driveway, I was beginning to panic. After some terrifying searches online and a tearful call to the after-hours nurse in my obstetrician's office, I learned that unless I had fallen a good distance and landed on my belly, there was almost no chance the fall could have caused harm to my baby.

I learned one other thing from that experience that would stick with me. The problem wasn't that I didn't know anything about childbirth. The problem was that everything I'd learned, I'd learned from television. This experience sharpened my focus, and it eventually led to the final shape of my dissertation project, which investigated narratives of childbirth in four

arenas: television and film, medical research, insurance policy, and childbirth advocacy communities online.

People often ask me how someone with degrees in English ended up studying childbirth. It's a good question. What I say is that though I did have to learn a lot about the physiological and scientific aspects of childbirth, the primary subject of my research is stories and the way that stories circulate through different genres, communities, and media to shape people and the worlds they inhabit. I *did* want to understand more about how women's experiences of pregnancy and childbirth had been shaped by the way our culture talks about and represents birth. But what I also really wanted to know was how narratives become embedded in our imaginations, gain cultural authority, and influence embodied experiences. And how do ordinary people use writing to talk back, invent their own narratives, or counter the most dominant ones?

In order to begin to answer those questions, what I most needed was what I gained in my decade of studying in English departments. I needed narrative thinking, the ability to see patterns of stories across time, genre, medium, and culture. I needed a high tolerance for ambiguity, the resilience to hold several contradicting ideas in tension and carefully explore the merits and weaknesses of each. I needed questions to help me find meaning in the human experience of birth, rather than the medical, scientific, or economic one. Instead of asking "What is the current Medicaid policy for coverage of midwifery services," I asked "What story is Medicaid policy telling about whether childbirth is an illness or a function of health." Instead of asking "What the scientific evidence for a particular birth intervention showed," I asked about the picture of birth that emerges from the way women's birthing bodies are named and described in medical research.

What emerged from these questions was a single dominant narrative of childbirth as a mysterious and often terrifyingly dangerous event best managed by scientific medicine. That dominant narrative also shaped the way that those critical of biomedical maternity care and alternative birth workers, like midwives and doulas, talked about birth because they were always writing in response to it. In short, our imagination for what childbirth looks like can contribute to the lived experience of it. The poet Adrienne Rich wrote in 1978 that "no more fitting image could be imagined for the bondage of woman: sheeted, supine, drugged, her wrists strapped down and her legs in stirrups, at the very moment when she is bringing life into the world" (171). This view of birth stands neatly alongside hundreds of sheeted, supine women pictured giving birth on the Discovery Health channel and to the disembodied way that medical researchers describe the necessity of electronic fetal monitoring. All three are telling a particular story about this simultaneously profound and everyday experience, one that without analysis and alternatives can come to stand in for the unquestioned and taken-for-granted norm. In my view, drawing attention to the ways that such narratives work gives us more tools to resist, dislodge, and revise them. As the feminist science studies scholar Donna Haraway has put it, "It is not enough to show radical historical contingency and modes of construction for everything. . .We need the power of modern critical theories of how meanings and bodies get made, not in order to deny meanings and bodies, but in order to build meanings and bodies that have a chance for life" (580).

Questions about how stories shape us and how we can use them to create a more just and sustainable world still animate my research and my teaching. What I have learned in the decades since forming those initial questions, especially in my work with students, is that training in narrative and imaginative thinking provides a set of useful tools that a lot of other people don't

have. The ability to see narrative patterns beneath the surface of any text, the capacity to take the chaos of any kind of information and give it a narrative order, the open-mindedness and imagination to see many possibilities in a given situation, and a deep curiosity about how language relates to reality—these are skills that do not belong to any one vocational path or career trajectory. The practice of these skills has the potential to form a particular way of seeing, one I believe the broken world around us needs.

In my first year at Samford, I taught a special topics class in the English Department called Writing about Women's Health. In the course, we engaged with many of the questions from my research, but we applied them to embodied experiences all along the spectrum of women's lives. We explored the stories we'd been told as children about what it meant to have a period and then traced those messages through popular culture, from the American Girl Body Book to Always ads that appeared during the Super Bowl. We read about the racial disparities in maternal health and asked how it could be that Black women in the twenty-first century are still three to four times more likely to die of childbirth-related causes than their white peers regardless of age, income level, or education. We pressed into the stories and the silences, reading the messages of contemporary culture for what they suggested about what it meant to be a woman, what it meant to be healthy, and what it meant to be ill.

And then we used writing to talk back. One student wrote a narrative essay about her harrowing experience with chronic pain and misdiagnosis, and then she scripted a short film about living with endometriosis, enlisting two classmates to act in it. Another student researched the culture of eating disorders among college runners and wrote a powerful piece that wove in her own experience. Other projects explored body image on Instagram, codes of femininity in figure skating, film representations of periods, the use of hormonal birth control to treat

menstrual symptoms in young women, among other issues that affect the everyday lives of women and girls. What all their work shared was a careful attention to the way that the stories that circulate around us about gender, bodies, and health convey particular, impactful messages, and a commitment to intentionally crafting a piece of writing that would speak back, counter falsehood with truth, distortion with clarity, silence with voice.

There has been a lot of handwringing over the decline of the humanities, a trend that has kept steady for a while now. For those who have neglected to support the humanities in favor of business and STEM, or who don't understand how an English major could be a worthwhile way to spend a college education, I wish I could provide a window into the kind of transformative learning that happens when students practice reading the world as a text and see meaning there that has gone unnoticed or unacknowledged, or when they find the courage and the voice to write for an audience they didn't believe would listen to them. As I sat listening to students present their final projects on the last day of my Writing about Women's Health class, I found that my hopes for those students were grounded both in my longing to see us, especially the young women among us, free from so many of the messages that have told us that we are defined by our bodies, and in the belief that becoming careful readers of the world and having the skills to engage the problems we see with excellent writing is part of what has the power to reshape that world. For me, it is how we in the study of English participate in the work of making things new: we read, we write, and we do so with hope.

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Commentary

Clay Birchfield

On Writing LGBTQIA Characters

While inclusivity and diversity in literature have grown over the past few years and continue to grow each day, accurate and sensitive representation of minority groups is still underdeveloped. Considering that many popular writers do not belong to these groups but would like to be inclusive in their works, it is no surprise that some portrayals of LGBTQIA characters become misrepresentative, and worse, tokenistic. These problems, I believe, can be broadly categorized under the term *appropriation*, a pitfall that I dread stumbling into and seek to avoid at all costs. The desire for representation within my fiction and works of creative writing leads me to write characters who belong to minority groups, but I am constantly plagued by the realization that I do not fully understand their experiences and cannot, therefore, accurately portray them. My worst fear is that I will inadvertently portray them in a way that has a negative impact. I have thought about this topic for a while now, and since the theme for this year's issue of *Wide Angle* is gender and sexuality, I thought it would be topical to share the question I have struggled with for a long time now and some of the possible answers I have found for it. What place does a cisgender straight white man have in a world that is, as it should be, becoming more diverse and allowing more voices to be heard?

My desire for inclusivity is precariously balanced with a fear that I will unintentionally appropriate, misrepresent, or tokenize the people that I am trying to include in my fiction. This feeling has stopped me from writing characters with diverse sexualities and genders as I become

paralyzed by the fear that I will inaccurately represent them. Sometimes it stops me from writing at all because I am so caught up in the idea that I might do something wrong. I do not claim to have a concrete answer to this dilemma, but I have broken it down into three main questions that make up the larger one, and by addressing each one individually, I believe I have at the very least come to a personal conclusion on the topic.

The first question is this: How can I accurately and positively write about experiences that I have never had? I desire to include diverse characters in my writing because, quite frankly, life is boring without diversity. The differences between individuals are what make life interesting, and my writing should reflect that. But because I have never lived the life of a transgender man or a someone who identifies as nonbinary, attempting to create characters who represent these lives could end in creating generalizations due to my own lack of knowledge and experience.

In this case, the best solution I have thought of is to have open and honest conversations with the people in my life who do belong to these groups. This not only allows the opportunity to share and learn about the experiences outside of my own life but also creates an opportunity to share my work and ask for advice. This way, even if I have written something misrepresentative, it can be called out and fixed before it ever has the chance to be seen by an audience. By having conversations with people in my life who belong to minority groups, I am not only attempting to gain understanding of certain experiences that the characters throughout my fiction may have experienced, but, more importantly, I am fostering deep relationships with the people I care about and trying to understand them as individuals on a deeper level. The latter of those two accomplishments is an exercise that I do not do enough of, and I feel like the world would benefit from more attempts to understand.

The second question arises with the fear that I may inadvertently fall into the trap that many people like me have fallen into before: following the desire to be inclusive, I use these characters to comment on the problems that these people face in real life and effectively begin to speak *for* them. The scariest thing about this problem is that I can envision a situation in which I do this unintentionally. In trying to be accurate and create a story that means something, I overstep my bounds and begin speaking on topics that I have no right speaking on. This is not to say that being a good ally means that we should be a silent ally and make our LGBTQIA friends and loved ones do all the talking, but it is more to say that the way in which we support them needs to be done in a tasteful manner. For instance, an accurate portrayal of a gay man whose character arc calls attention to the suffering that gay men experience in a homophobic world might be a tactful and productive way to draw attention to the suffering and mistreatment that gay men experience in our current society. However, on the other side of that, using a character who is a gay man to make sweeping claims about the future of the LGBTQIA movement and where it should go from the present day is not positive or constructive because, while I am an ally to this movement, I am not and cannot be a *member* of that community.

For this problem, I feel that the best way to avoid speaking where I have no right to speak would be the same as the answer to the first problem: by having open and honest conversations with those in my life who belong to these communities about where the line is on what I can and cannot speak on. By having an open line of communication and developing those relationships, I am doing more than just keeping myself from overstepping my boundaries. I am also continuing to foster meaningful relationships.

Another good practice throughout this process, especially for this issue, is to have a deep level of introspection. It is important to ask myself about the intentions behind my writing and

what I wish to achieve with it. If I have thought too highly of myself and I have unintentionally developed the desire to make a commentary of the LGBTQIA movement through my piece, then I need to rethink what I am doing and make the necessary changes not only to my writing but to my mindset. I try very hard to make sure that my intentions are positive and pure, but, despite my best intentions, what the reader perceives can be totally different. As long as I go into the process knowing that it is not my place to speak for this community, but to elevate the position of the community and allow them to speak, then I believe I must trust my readers to understand my intentions. That is all an author can do for any writing, honestly.

Lastly, the third problem is the one that I have thought about the most, and it is the one that I have the most confidence in answering. Is it right for me to try to write, to become published, and to try to put my voice into the world when people like me have been the dominant voices for so long? As a cisgender straight white man, I am a part of the group of people who have historically dominated the realm of literature, and it is only recently that more diverse voices have had the opportunity to write, speak, and be published. That is wonderful, and as time goes on it will only become more diverse and that is a great thing. But among all those voices that are now being heard, among all the people who have been waiting decades to write, among the sheer number of people who are now putting their voices out there, is me. It is an isolating and diminishing feeling. This postmodern thought of insignificance in a world of billions of people is compounded by the understanding that, for centuries, people like me have had their voices heard and celebrated. We have had our chance, right? So, is it even right for me to try to write? Is it right for me to throw myself into the sea of people who are living diverse and experienced lives and try make myself heard?

This is the thought that worries me the most, but it is also the one that I feel I have the clearest insight into. The answer I have come up with is twofold: First: of course, I should write, because writing is an opportunity for everyone to express themselves and their ideas. The only thing that stands between a writer's pen and the paper is opportunity, and everyone should feel as if they have the right to take it. The second part of the answer is this: while I may share the qualities of those who have come before me and dominated this field, I do *not* share their mindset, and my ideas and expression are different from theirs because they are mine. As much anxiety and pressure is placed on us in this postmodern, hyper-individualistic society, that pressure is balanced by the great opportunity we have to share our individual experiences and ourselves through writing. Therefore, it would be a shame not to write. It would be a shame not to express the things that make me different from those who came before me.

But it is extremely important to express these things with humility, because at the end of the day I feel as if writing and reading are truly humbling experiences. We read, and we are transported to places and times and minds that are not our own, and in the span of a moment, through a poem, a novel, or a short story, we are in the shoes and in the experiences of another. When I write, I am situating myself in a person's life that is not my own, and though it may be fictional, I do not think that that devalues the experience. And, as previously mentioned, the simple act of speaking to people with diverse experiences as part of the writing process is another opportunity to find humility and generate an open dialogue to try to foster understanding.

In the end, while the problem of appropriation and misrepresentation may still present itself as we continue to move forward in a more openly diverse world, I think that approaching it with sincerity and thoughtfulness will not only allow me to prevent any negative portrayals, but also lead to personal growth in garnering a deeper understanding of others. And while these

solutions may not work for or be satisfactory to everyone, I have found that putting my thoughts into these perspectives not only alleviates the anxiety of writing outside my own experiences but also encourages me to reach out to others, make new connections, and try to learn something new about the world outside of myself.

Commentary

Preston S. Blakeley

Southernness, Place, and Sexuality: Postsouthern Prospects in *Child of God*

The notion that the American South exists as an essential ontological fact has engendered much discussion in a postmodern world where *invention* triumphs over *creation*. Recent criticism in Southern studies postulates the constructedness of the region and dismisses Southern exceptionalism. In his book *Inventing Southern Literature*, Michael Kreyling sustains the postmodern spirit of *invention* when he proposes that Southern elites "produced the South in the same way that all . . . elites produce ideological realities" (6). In the competition for power, elites constructed "the South" through political and cultural means. But Kreyling deconstructs their hierarchical invention and reimagines a *postsouthern* South without regional distinctiveness.

The discourse regarding the sociocultural evolution of "the South," and the repudiation of its regional distinctiveness, is curious given the significance of place in Southern literature. Given that Southern literature, from Kate Chopin to Wendell Berry, has been tethered to a *sense of place*, what are the motivations for the deconstruction of place? And how might postsouthernism impact what Kreyling calls "the most important area of growth and change" (181)—*that is*, the scholarly conversation regarding gender and sexuality—and its representation in Southern literature such as Cormac McCarthy's novel *Child of God*?

The Problem with Place

In his monograph *The Postsouthern Sense of Place in Contemporary Fiction*, Martyn Bone asserts that the Southern "sense of place," which was constructed by a coalition of scholars

called the Vanderbilt Agrarians, is tied to agrarian economics (3). Because the Agrarians established that place was inseparable from the soil that provided the foundation for economic life—and agrarianism in the South before and after the Civil War was entangled in discriminatory race relations—place echoes the tragic history of slavery and was used by "[Southern whites] to indicate the status of blacks" (4). The culturally constructed and historically located sense of place was used to imply the inhuman status of Black people because of its association with the South's racist economic structure. Bone notes that place was conceived as "a bulwark against capitalism and the threat it posed to the . . . [region's] rural social geography" (5). As capitalism was integral to the cessation of agrarianism, and it facilitated the eradication of slave labor that was largely agricultural, the notion that place acts as a defense against capitalism—and a *celebration* of the South's rurality—perpetuates its racially problematic nature. In this light, the tragic racial element that pervades the Agrarian sense of place, which is pithily expressed by Richard Godden's term "the aesthetics of anti-development" (ix), necessitates the deconstruction of Southern distinctiveness.

The aesthetics of anti-development also infect the relationship between place and gender. Because place echoes the agrarian *modus vivendi*, and it invokes the presence of either the plantation or the farm, it is further associated with the domestic space—the farmhouse or plantation-home. The domestic space in the rural South implies the subjugation of the feminine under the rule of the masculine. There is an altogether chivalric spirit in the gender dynamics of the South, wherein the female was thought of as the typological Blessed Virgin, the "Ideal standard" of gentleness and purity, who by her subservience tends to the private matters of the home while she submits herself to the salvific, knightly authority of the masculine, who represents the family in the public and economic sphere. While men attended the economic

locale, the agrarian *place*, their *other* was restricted to the domestic realm. Place, as it was conceived by Southern white males, is problematic because it indicates the public triumph of the masculine and the private submissiveness of the feminine. As place signals the plantation, it privileges masculinity, and as it signals the home, by logical proximity, it restricts femininity.

Postsouthern Prospects in *Child of God*

But postsouthernists dismantle hierarchies and imagine a "New South," or a multitude of Souths, devoid of the aesthetics of anti-development. The New South is unexceptional insofar as its capitalistic economy is indistinguishable from any industrial center. Place meets its replacement in the form of the *urbs*; racial inequality with diversity; patriarchy with gender equality. And though the deconstruction of a marginalized South is productive for a fair society, the dismissal of once revered—yet destructive—in the male cultural psyche, a fission represented through Cormac McCarthy's sexually deviant protagonist Lester Ballard in *Child of God*. As a proposal for future study, I want to suggest that Ballard fails to inhabit the postsouthern space because his deviant sexual behavior is an ironic symptom of the capitalistic spirit that characterizes the new Southern context. Although Ballard wanders aimless through the Appalachian wilderness, and this placelessness signifies his participation in an anti-Agrarian world, his transactional sexual action is a textual critique of the capitalistic postsouthern milieu.

Child of God recognizes the rising postsouthern urban space through Ballard's inability to function in that very space. Thus, his wanderings throughout mountainous Sevier County, Tennessee, and his isolation from the social sphere, signal his ironic participation in a post-place, postsouthern context because of his *otherness*. His separation from the former agrarian place is evident given his eviction from his home at the beginning of the novel. The homeless Ballard squats in vacant houses and stalks young couples in stalled cars. Far from the agrarian sense of

place, like Faulkner's Jefferson, *Child of God* is almost altogether without the presence of the town. Ballard is functionally a ghost; when he does participate in the social sphere, such as when he enters the town parish, none of the townsfolk regard his existence (32). Hunted by vigilantes who take advantage of his intellectual impairments, Ballard escapes into caves, a profound scene that illustrates his placelessness and the failure of social structures to facilitate his assimilation into the *polis* (177). While the audience is possessed by Ballard's perpetual dispossession and encounters the pathos of his isolation, the failure of the postsouthern center to offer social redemption is symptomatic of an industrial-infused cultural sphere in which commodity triumphs over community.

While unable to participate in the rising postsouthern cultural atmosphere, Ballard finds himself impacted by the capitalistic spirit of his time as he aims to reattain his "Southern" masculinity—masculinity that postsouthernists dismantle because of its hierarchical association with place-particular gender dynamics—through *transactional* sexual deviance. Perhaps the most telling example of Ballard's sexually capitalistic motivations is when he pays fifty cents to attend a peep show (29). Through the metaphoric mode of bodily transaction, the scene establishes Ballard's commodification of female sexuality as he views his gendered counterpart less as a medium of mutual respect but as an object to be consumed. Ballard's voyeuristic escapades signal his participation in a sexual market sphere where *getting and spending* is (1) given primacy but (2) utilized as a method of retaining former sexual and gender norms lost in the post-place *zeitgeist*. His commodification of the feminine as a mere 'thing,' though occurring in a time separate from the reign of the agrarian place, is quite similar to the objectification of the female in a traditional and domestic context. Thus, one might read Ballard's post-place,

capitalistic perpetuation of agrarian female sexuality as an ironic textual indictment of postsouthernism and agrarianism.

Place, as imagined by traditional, Southern white males, is reminiscent of racial inequity and unjust gender norms. Though postsouthernists posit a post-place, unexceptional, and urban "New South" devoid of the inequalities of yesteryear, McCarthy's *Child of God* might offer a critique of the influx of global capitalism in growing—once rural—metropolitan centers through his protagonist's perplexed yearning to retain old agrarian values through the commodification of sexuality. Perhaps in Lester's destitute disposition, and in his sad swinging between old and new, one comprehends a subtle criticism of the failure of postmodern thought to offer a substitute for the masculinity once deconstructed.

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Commentary

Ellen Kesler

The Necessity of Multiplicity: Examining the Lack of and Need for a Diversified Directorial Landscape

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When Frances McDormand accepted the Oscar for Best Actress in 2018, she asked every female nominee in the audience to stand together for a moment of recognition and appreciation. She went on to say, "Okay, look around everybody. Look around, ladies and gentlemen, because we all have stories to tell and projects we need financed. Don't talk to us about it at the parties tonight. Invite us into your office in a couple days, or you can come to ours, whatever suits you best, and we'll tell you all about them" (McDormand, n. pag.). Her words sparked further conversation and awareness within the industry pertaining to the role that women play both in front of and behind the camera. The film industry has made progress in creating an accessible space for women to bring their creative visions to life, but there is still much work to be done.

Hollywood has existed for over a century, and yet women often still struggle to achieve equal opportunities, pay, and even respect while working within the industry. It is concerning that even I, who spends ample time engaging with films, struggle to name more than a handful of prominent female directors working today. This year's Oscars nominations featured no female directors and a scarce number of female screenwriters. Why is it that women still have to fight for inclusivity within this field that has had plenty of time to change in order to further amplify the voices and projects of female writers, directors, and actors? Perhaps tracing the history of women's involvement within the film industry will illuminate the potentially intrinsic prejudice

of this field towards women and more specifically towards women from less privileged backgrounds.

The first recorded female director, Alice Guy-Blaché, was a true pioneer of cinema. She directed, produced, or supervised over one thousand films throughout her career in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She described film as "her prince charming," and in 1911, The Moving Picture News wrote that she was "a fine example of what a woman could accomplish if given a fair chance at life" (Dargis). She even opened her own film studio in New Jersey, but because of personal difficulties, she had to step away from her career, and unfortunately her work and influence were largely forgotten even during her own lifetime. In the earliest days of film production, this talented and unfortunately extremely singular woman who paved the way for future filmmakers was lost in the tides of history. While in recent years Guy-Blaché has received more recognition for her contributions, it is incredibly concerning that a female trailblazer within the film industry essentially faded into obscurity while male filmmakers retained the spotlight for years to come. Despite the progression of the film industry in recent years, female filmmakers continually do not receive the same opportunities for working behind the camera. A recent study which analyzed the top sixteen hundred films from the years 2007 to 2022 found that eighty percent of directors were white men, four percent were white women, and only one percent were women from historically underrepresented groups (Elesser). These statistics reveal a concerning lack of female intersectionality within the directorial landscape.

While exceptions to this fact do exist, they are unfortunately few and far between. Directors such as Julie Dash, whose 1991 film *Daughters of the Dust* was the first feature film helmed by a Black woman to receive a large theatrical release in the United States, and Ava Duverney whose truly incredible 2016 documentary *13th* earned the nomination for best

documentary feature at that year's Oscars, are two examples of the power and influence that lies within the stories of women from various backgrounds. Both of these films prompted awareness and discussion of systemic societal issues, and this is not to say that films directed by women that do not accomplish the same thing are inherently less valuable, but it is important to note that the industry often favors or at least more readily fosters the work of women already connected in some way to the film industry. A few of the most established working female directors within the industry today are Greta Gerwig, Jane Campion, Sofia Coppola, and Kathryn Bigelow, the latter being the first woman to receive the Oscar for best director in 2010. All of these extremely talented women come from backgrounds in which their access to education and resources was not hindered due to their socioeconomic situations. These women have all made significant contributions to the film industry and even directed some of my favorite films of all time, but it is representative of the oftentimes problematic landscape of Hollywood that these prevalent female directors emerged from similar backgrounds. Coming from a more privileged background in no way diminishes the value of art that one creates, but intersectionality must permeate the film industry, as film itself is a means for connecting people from various realities. The film industry must amplify the voices of those who would otherwise go unheard, and while it is possible to write and direct films from perspectives other than one's own, it is immensely important to ensure that those with unique stories have a platform and means of portraying their realities.

Frances McDormand ended her Oscar acceptance speech by saying these two words, "inclusion rider," which at the time stirred conversation within Hollywood as it was and still is a fairly new concept. It essentially is a provision within an actor's contract that when added, ensures a certain level of diversity and inclusion when hiring talent both behind and in front of

the camera. The inclusion rider began as a way for Hollywood A-listers to take initiative and actively work towards diversifying their field, but following its reimagining in 2021, companies themselves can apply this provision as they work to diversify their hiring pools. Now the power is in the hands of both prominent individuals working within the film industry, and entire film corporations themselves.

But why does this matter? Some people might argue that Hollywood, or the film industry in general, has functioned effectively for years and therefore change is not necessary. Why make alterations to a system that churns out top-grossing films and occasionally drives people to the theatres, ensuring that the executives get paid and in turn films continue to be made? Because film exists to challenge, educate, and embolden people on a large scale. We engage with films because they provide insight into the human condition, but also because in this world we drown in our self-focus. Oftentimes we are inadvertently unable to turn our gaze outward, but when we grapple with films that tell the stories of people and places that seem incredibly counter to our own experiences, we gain deeper empathy and understanding. We live in world pervaded by singularity, the groups who historically have benefited from the privilege of consistently having their voices heard often control the stories dissipated throughout society. In order for film to continue functioning as an art medium that promotes the plurality of narratives, everyone with talent, drive, and a story to tell, must be afforded the same opportunities to share that story with the world. There are hundreds of female filmmakers from a wide range of backgrounds working today, but they require increasingly achievable avenues for amplification in order for film to continue to function as a provocative art form. Many extraordinarily talented women circulate their films through festivals each year, and yet go unnoticed. Encouraging and fostering the work of all women within the industry through tangible means such as the inclusion rider clause is the

only way to ensure that progress continues. This specific and tumultuous moment in history requires a means for expanding universal empathy and fostering a greater sense of understating among various groups of people. I truly believe that film is one of those means, and in order to carry out this function, it requires the voices of many, not just the voice of one.

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Commentary

Grace LaFave

More than a Love Story: Themes of Abuse in *Twilight*

Romanticizing abuse has become a popular trend in literature, especially in the youth-fiction genre. This trend remains alarming for many scholars because they fear that making abuse seem romantic can cause people to accept bad behavior in their relationships more readily. Notably, not all books about abuse romanticize it; sometimes an author writes about abuse to critique or draw attention to the dangers of it. Yet, romanticizing abuse occurs when a piece of literature makes harmful, abusive behavior seem appealing. According to the Domestic Violence Services Network, in talking about romanticizing abuse in literature, "Abusive and controlling behavior is often portrayed as an expression of love and, therefore, desirable. It is 'romanticized' into something positive that the reader should root for and idealize in their own relationships" (n. pag.). In books where the author upholds abusive behavior as what the reader should strive for, it can elevate a relationship that should not be emulated.

Published in 2005, the *Twilight* series has caused significant controversy because of its romanticization of abusive behavior, specifically through the relationship between Bella and Edward. Stephanie Meyer, the author, admitted to basing *Twilight* on the classic novel *Wuthering Heights*, by Emily Brontë, and she mentions *Wuthering Heights* frequently in the third book, *Eclipse*. However, *Wuthering Heights* portrays a harmful relationship, and the characters are disastrous overall. The way Meyer compares the relationship of Cathy and Heathcliff from

Wuthering Heights to Edward and Bella illustrates how *Eclipse* romanticizes abusive, toxic relationships, a dangerous trend that can raise concerns for how people view love.

Through *Eclipse's* reference to *Wuthering Heights*, one can better understand the abuse found in this story. At the beginning of the story, Bella mentions reading *Wuthering Heights*. Edward later questions this decision by saying, "I don't understand why you like it. The characters are ghastly people who ruin each other's lives. I don't understand how Heathcliff and Cathy ended up being ranked with couples like Romeo and Juliet or Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy. It isn't a love story, it's a hate story" (24). Edward assesses the book correctly by calling it a "hate story." *Wuthering Heights* is extremely violent. One scholar writes, "It was claimed that, when Wuthering Heights was published in 1847, it was widely dismissed as a coarse, immoral and subversive novel" (Baldellou 148). As a result, people should not read *Wuthering Heights* as a romance. Rather, it persists as a story of revenge, a much darker novel than a beautiful love story.

Yet, even though Bella and Edward acknowledge *Wuthering Heights* as a story of dark revenge, they still relate to Catherine and Heathcliff. Towards the middle of the book, Bella states that Edward said he sympathizes with Heathcliff. However, Heathcliff is a vile character who abuses his wife, his child, and his wife's daughter who is not his. To give an example, he says to his wife, Isabella, "Get up, wretched idiot, before I stamp you to death" before throwing a knife at her (165). He does not love her and only marries her to get revenge on his true love who married someone else as well. Throughout the book, his violence remains extremely alarming. After explaining that Edward compares himself to Heathcliff, Bella finds her copy of Wuthering Heights open to a quote after Edward had finished reading it. In this part of the book, Heathcliff says:

> "And there you see the distinction between our feelings: had he been in my place and I in his, though I hated him with a hatred that turned my life to gall, I never would have raised a hand against him. You may look incredulous if you please! I never would have banished him from her society as long as she desired his. The moment her regard ceased, I would have torn his heart out, and drank his blood! But, till then– if you don't believe me, you don't know me– till then, I would have died by inches before I touched a single hair of his head." (215)

She shivers when she reads the phrase "drank his blood." After all, Edward is a vampire with violent tendencies. The fact that she feels fear after reading this shows her, perhaps unconscious, fear of her boyfriend. One can understand her fear. After all, he admits to killing many people, even innocent ones, for their blood before he converted to "veganism" (371). She then tries to convince herself that she must have dreamed of Edward relating to Heathcliff, and that the book fell open to this page coincidentally. However, to the reader, it sounds like a vain attempt to explain away the toxicity of their relationship so that she can stay with him. People in abusive situations often try to justify their situations (National Library of Medicine). Therefore, Bella's rationalizing the situation suggests her abuse further. Not to mention, it seems suspicious that Edward would compare himself to Heathcliff. Charlotte Brontë, Emily's sister, wrote about Heathcliff having "perverted passion and passionate perversity," and one can see this in Edward, too (Phillip 366).

Edward's perversity becomes apparent through the way he treats Bella; throughout the book, he constantly tries to control her. For example, he gets jealous of Bella's best friend, Jacob, and, at the beginning of the novel, he will not allow her to see him. When Bella says she will visit Jacob anyways, he remarks, "Then I'll have to stop you" (28). In this quote, Edward

asserts his control over her. Rather than allowing Bella to do as she thinks best, he treats her as something he can control. For example, the book says, "'She *is* mine,' Edward's low voice was suddenly dark, not as composed as before" (278). The use of italics is especially disturbing. This quote objectifies Bella, making her something that he can possess. Bella uses the imagery of chains and confinement to describe her relationship with Edward. Bella relates, "Edward's shielding arms had become restraints" (69). Later, she also comments, "Cold iron fetters locked around my wrists . . ." (367). Under the facade of protecting her, Edward becomes controlling. Creepily, Edward says, "I'm the only one who has permission to hold you hostage, remember?" (350). All these examples further show Edward's assertion of power over Bella. According to the *Scientific Research Journal*, "The most common motivation for abusive behavior is power and control over the victim. Abusers are possessive, although they usually deny their actions of blaming and controlling the victim" (1). Throughout the book, Edward attempts to attain power over Bella, and she seems to have little agency against his controlling behavior. These actions romanticize abuse because they cast Edward's problematically controlling behavior as romantic. This conduct affirms people using violence and jealousy masked as devotion as the means to control their partners.

As a result of Edward's control over her, Bella becomes submissive and loses her sense of individuality. Throughout the book, Bella unquestioningly does what Edward says and, as a result, remains a weak character. She exists as Edward's possession, and he treats her almost like a prisoner. One scholar discusses how Edward quickly "tease[s] Bella as soon as she dares trespass the limits considered appropriate to women, for instance, when she takes the initiative or makes decisions on her own and is consequently reprimanded" (Baldellou 152). Edward wants Bella to stay a submissive companion and does not want her to gain independence in any way.

Instead, he desires that she remain dependent on him. Therefore, she becomes alarmingly reliant on Edward. Her "definition of hell" is being separated from Edward (372). Even Bella's mom notices. Though she has not interacted much with the couple since Bella lives with her dad and since she lives far away, she comments, "There's something [. . .] strange about the way you two are together . . . the way he watches you– it's so protective. . . . He's very intense about you" (56). She says later, "You orient yourself around him without even thinking about it. When he moves, even a little bit, you adjust your position at the same time. . . . I've never seen anything like it" (56). Even after seeing her daughter interact with Edward for a short time, Bella's mom questions the healthiness of this relationship. She sees his overwatching stare as intense and concerning, and she notices Bella's submission to Edward. Apprehensively, she notes that Bella and Edward have an unhealthy attachment, and that Bella conforms to whatever Edward wants.

Bella's dependency on Edward mirrors Cathy's on Heathcliff from *Wuthering Heights*. Just like Bella declares, "I already knew I could not live without Edward" (482), Catherine explains her love for Heathcliff in a similar way: "He's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of his and mine are the same" (79). The language of these quotes connotate a similar meaning: both women are hopelessly dedicated in their love for their partners. Terry Eagleton, a literary theorist, writes about Cathy's declaration: "Indeed, what the couple share is scarcely a relationship at all, since there is no question of otherness involved" (n. pag.). The language of this quote, Eagleton argues, dissolves the agency of the two characters. Rather than keeping her individuality, she intertwines her sense of self with Heathcliff. In a similar way, Bella stays addicted to Edward. As a result, she decides to give up her entire life to become a vampire, which will cause her a lot of suffering, instead of giving up Edward. Reflected by

Cathy's dependence on Heathcliff, Bella dissolves her independence because of her devotion to Edward.

Through this submission to and reliance on Edward, Bella loses her self-esteem. Because Edward controls her throughout the book, she resigns, feeling unworthy of him. Her lack of self-confidence is apparent. She comments, "I deserved him now less than I ever had" (425). This self-depreciation shows an alarming insecurity that she possesses. When reflecting on becoming a vampire, she relates that she would finally be "someone who could stand next to Edward and feel like she belonged there" (280). As a vampire, Bella would become stronger and more beautiful. This example shows her insecurity at her present state because she feels as if she does not deserve Edward. The *Health Psychology Research Journal* lists a lack of self-esteem as a possible sign of a person being abused (65). Through the way Edward acts towards her, one can understand why Bella would have this insecurity. He treats her as less than himself, objectifying her. For example, he fights over her with Jacob while she is in the room and keeps her out of plans, almost treating her like a child. He demeans her and keeps her from doing things she wants to do with the excuse of keeping her safe. Therefore, she problematically thinks of herself as less than him, setting herself up to be in an unequal, abusive relationship dynamic.

Yet, Bella does not persist as merely a victim; she also manipulates Edward—or tries to—a few times throughout the story. For example, she convinces him not to fight the other vampires with his family and to stay with her instead. She plays on his guilt over leaving her at an earlier time in the series, claiming she cannot be without him. Bella says, "I was sorry. I hated to make him do this" (345). The only reasoning behind this action is she does not want him to die, leaving her alone. This manipulation shows a toxic side of Bella. She gaslights some of the people closest to her, even going so far as to compare herself to Cathy: "I was like Cathy, like

Wuthering Heights, only my options were so much better. . . . And here I sat crying about it, not doing anything productive to make it right. Just like Cathy" (422). She cannot choose between Jacob and Edward like Cathy cannot choose between Edgar and Heathcliff, so she compares herself to her. Likewise, Cathy is a very manipulative character. She marries Edgar merely for the status, though she admits to only loving him for his appearance and money (79). At one point, the maid thinks "Far better she be dead, than lingering a burden and a misery-maker to all about her" (Brontë 150). Her manipulation and selfishness cause problems and hurt the people around her. Bella, in a similar though less dramatic way, manipulates others to get what she wants. Although she loves both Edward and Jacob, she wants to have both and uses both of them to her own ends.

Romanticizing abuse in literature has caused many scholars to be concerned with the message it sends to the readers. Laura Béres, a psychologist who works with victims of abuse, writes on romanticizing abuse: "It appears as though the romanticization of control and abuse, and empathy for the abuser, have become more prevalent in the more recent texts, which concerns me" (205). She also states, "My concern is that they [abuse victims] find popular cultural texts that may reinforce, rather than challenge, their positions within abusive relationships" (Béres 195). Abuse victims may find their relationships affirmed in literature like *Twilight.* Throughout the series, Meyer justifies Edward's abusive behavior, creating sympathy for bad behavior. Rationalizing bad behavior can normalize abuse and cause people to perceive it as romantic. Seeing abuse as romantic distorts our vision of love from something good to something violent. Abuse should not be praised; it should be condemned. As *Wuthering Heights* is more of a novel about revenge than love, *Twilight* is more a series on abuse than an innocent love story.

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Commentary

Juliana Mink

The Demon, the Girl, and the Church:

Female Sexuality and Binary Stereotypes in Religious Horror Film

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Female roles in horror films have for a long time been the subject of academic and casual conversation. While most moviegoers are familiar with the female victim being an extremely common trope, the female monster is also a pervasive stereotype in the horror cannon. From classical mythology on, the female monster reflects societal fears of the female. After all, horror films are "constructed with metaphors of what haunts American society" (Lilek, n. pag.). These metaphors are recycled and remixed, keeping pace with the changing tide of cultural anxieties in contemporary audiences. For example, as Emily Um references in "How the Horror Genre Reflects Societal Fears Throughout Time," independent slasher films like *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) rose in popularity in the wake of bloody and brutal wars like the Vietnam War: the screen reflected the audience's unspoken anxieties (Um, n. pag.).

Likewise, *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), along with *The Exorcist* (1973) and *The Omen* (1976) close behind, represents a reaction to the American culture's increasing post-modernization and crumbling spirituality. Um cites the iconic April 1966 TIME Magazine cover, which asked its readers in bold, red letters, "Is God Dead?" (Um, n. pag.). But it paradoxically seems that questions and conversations on the spiritual realm's legitimacy increased even as the culture became more atheistic. In many ways, exorcist films acted, and still act, as a countermovement to the atheistic pull, embracing the existence of dark spiritual forces,

encapsulating the fear of those entities, and illustrating traditional religious conflict between good and evil. In religious horror, films with exorcisms, demonic possessions, and other demonic beings, the religious representatives, like priests and other holy figures, fervently combat the dark spiritual forces. Audiences witness a familiar good-versus-evil tension as the angelic, good, and the Church fight to overcome the demons, evil, and metaphorical "worldliness." The good usually wins this battle: spiritual figures notoriously expel demons, victoriously chanting, "The power of Christ compels you," affirming traditional moral codes as goodness dispels the evil from whatever vessel it has corrupted.

Interestingly, the tension between the demonic and the Church is commonly bridged by a female figure. Christopher J. Olson identifies in *Possessed Women, Haunted States: Cultural Tensions in Exorcist Cinema* 127 exorcist films produced primarily in the 1970s and the 2010s. Most of these films utilize the same trope: a woman, usually a young woman right before or after puberty, gets possessed, and only a holy man can save her soul. This narrative arc is utilized in *The Exorcist* (1973), *Abby* (1973), *Repossessed* (1990), *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* (2005), *The Unborn* (2009), and *The Possession* (2014), among other examples. As these females approach sexual maturation, their sexuality becomes susceptible to evil. Realized female sexuality threatens the patriarchal order, thus a battle ensues to prohibit the female from deviating sexually and spiritually as exhibited through the evil presences plaguing her body. *The Exorcist* especially exhibits the patriarchal and religious fear of uncontrolled and unregulated female sexuality.

Religious dichotomies are not only seen through the warring Church/devil parties in *The Exorcist*, but through the female protagonist and the split role she plays while possessed. Female stereotypes in art and literature often fall into familiar binaries: angel or demon, virgin or whore, obedient wife or temptress. These roles permeate Jewish and Christian myths and texts. Firstly,

the Lilith/Eve contrast in Judaism represents this duality. Controversy surrounds the character of Lilith namely because her name is not mentioned in the Torah but appears in Midrashic Jewish texts and myths. According to these sources, at the creation of the world, Lilith was Adam's first wife before Eve. After refusing to sexually submit to Adam, Lilith fled the Garden of Eden into the wilderness. She is associated with demonology, eroticism, and infertility and, in Jewish folklore, is even said to be responsible for males' erotic dreams (*Blood, Gender and Power in Christianity and Judaism*, n. pag.). The antithesis to Lilith's figure is Eve, the dutiful second wife of Adam, but Christian tradition depicts Eve as the temptress or corrupter. One example of this perception in the New Testament is found in 1 Timothy 2: 13-14, which reads, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve; And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor" (ESV). Mary, the mother of Jesus, serves as the Christian opposite of Eve. Her virginity and motherhood, along with her birthing Jesus Christ, satisfy the requirements for a holy female figure in Christianity *(Asian American Theological Forum*, "The Eve and Mary Parallel"). Biblical rhetoric and Church tradition draw a stark contrast between Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Eve, the mother of sin. Additionally, their moral association differs drastically: Mary is good, pure, and holy, while Eve is bad, sinful, and corrupt. In art and literature throughout history, female figures are often situated somewhere within this diametric opposition, either performing as a Mary or as an Eve or Lilith. But no artistic illustration embodies this tension so literally as exorcist horror films.

The Exorcist is a fundamental example of the female oscillation between the binary stereotypes of Lilith/Eve and Mary. The film depicts twelve-year-old Regan, an innocent, pure girl on the brink of puberty. Her demonic possession completely transforms her appearance and character into an utterly monstrous image—indeed, the possessed female body is horrifying.

Barbara Creed in *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis* describes Regan's possession as an example of the monstrous-feminine, a term defining the ways women's gender and sexuality is made evil and grotesque in horror film. Creed explains that "possession becomes a mere excuse for legitimizing a display of aberrant feminine behavior which is depicted as depraved, monstrous, and abject" (Creed 31). Through the display of the abject, the fearful "other," the film adopts the archetypal struggle between good and evil, Church and demon, known and unknown. Regan's female body acts as the rope in a tug-of-war between these entities. The traditional displays of good versus evil provide subliminal messages about the female body and sexuality. The possessed Regan hurls profanities and makes obscene sexual references. There are graphic displays of her bodily fluids, including menstrual blood, as well as a scene in which Regan masturbates with a crucifix, an extreme image of sacrilege. As Creed states, "Regan's transformation from angel into devil is clearly a sexual one; it suggests that the family home, bastion of all the right virtues and laudable moral values, is built on a foundation of repressed sexual desires" (Creed 31). These scenes displaying Regan's possession mutate female sexuality into monstrous and grotesque images, something demonic and uncontrollable. Profane acts of sexuality evidence disorder in the film, and the religious male figures lunge into action to restore order.

The pull towards sexual awakening amid demonic possession and the resulting depiction of uncontrolled chaos and sexuality is reminiscent of the Lilith and Eve archetype. The pre-possessed female character aptly reflects a Mary figure: she is innocent, pure, playful, and a virgin. The possessed female morphs into exhibiting Lilith/Eve qualities. She becomes profane, lawless, destructive, and sexual. The character and the audience's fear of demonic young girls alludes to the cultural aversion to the Lilith/Eve archetype. As opposed to a safe, predictable

Mary figure, the possessed female is uncontrollable. Furthermore, in the case of demonic possession, the dichotomy between Lilith/Eve and Mary is contained within the same female body. Usually, Lilith/Eve and Mary figures are portrayed in separate characters, but with possession at play, one female now embodies both archetypes. This reflects a deeper societal fear than simply the fear of uncontrolled females generally. It expresses the anxiety that any female who performs as a Mary still retains the capacity to transform into a Lilith/Eve—like a girl possessed. The sexuality displayed in Regan's possession and the religious rebuttal reflects the societal fear of uncontrolled female sexuality and of any young girl becoming a Lilith.

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Anonymous is a proud Samford alumna. She is inspired by the prose of Sylvia Plath, the poetry of Mary Oliver, the creative nonfiction of Malcolm Gladwell, and the fantasy and theology of C.S. Lewis. She dreams of being an author and an attorney (not necessarily in that order).

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