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# CONTENTS

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	vii	Editor's Comments
ERIN CASINI	9	Breaking the Threshold
ANDREA CUEVA	17	Fairy Tale Portals: Gateways to Understanding Modern Life
ANNA FITTING Winner of the <i>NOMAD</i> Prize for Excellence in Undergraduate Scholarship	24	The Silent Border: Repression and Progression in <i>Silent Hill 2</i>
BRANDY GRAHAM	36	The Threshold of Identity: Internalizing the Male Gaze in John Green's <i>Paper Towns</i>
SARAH GOUGH-PIAZZA	46	"It's Showtime!": The Blending of Reality and Fantasy in Tim Burton's <i>Beetlejuice</i>
KATIE GUISLER	54	Dissipation of Form: Threshold of the Self and the Double Work of Culture in <i>Paprika</i> and <i>Woman Between Mirrors</i>
SARAH GREENLAW	65	Mirroring Reality: The Ambiguity between Hero and Villain in the Netflix Original Marvel's <i>Daredevil</i>
TAYLOR HEGGEN	75	Moral Thresholds, "Nymphets," and the Dialogic Imagination of Nabokov's <i>Lolita</i>
NATANIA HERNANDEZ	87	Sancho's Reality-based Perceptions of Fantasy: The Internal and External Threshold of Reality and the Fantastical
TATE JAMES	97	Empty Floating Castles: <i>Revolutionary Girl Utena's</i> Deconstruction of Gender Performance

BRIAUNA JONES	106	The Threshold of the Sublime: Standing in Awe and Fear in José María Heredia’s “En el Teocalli de Cholula”
ANNIE DE LANCIE	115	<i>Soprano</i> Thresholds
LILLIAN LOFTIN	126	Evelyn’s Evolution in El Barrio: An Evolution of Community, Family and Self and the Threshold Moment for El Barrio to Reunite their Puerto Rican Pride
DAKOTA MACCOLL	133	<i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i> Seen Through a Deleuzean Lens: How the Monolith Can Represent Both a Time-image and a Movement-image
MICHELLE MCKENNA	142	Cultural Thresholds: American Women’s Relationship to the French Woman
ADAM MEAD	151	Changing Hearts Through Photography
MILES SHEPARD	159	Liminal Thresholds in <i>El Laberinto Del Fauno</i>
LEAH FILLOY TROPER	167	Skateboarding Across Thresholds

# EDITOR'S COMMENTS

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JULIA “SUSI” GÓMEZ





# ERIN CASINI

Erin Casini is junior at the University of Oregon majoring in Classics and minoring in History. She is very passionate about Classical studies, specifically language, history, and mythology in Ancient Greece and Rome. She is involved in the Classics Department through memberships in the Classics Club and the Classics Honors Fraternity, Eta Sigma Phi. She is also involved with Kappa Alpha Theta sorority.

Mentor: **Bess Myers**

## BREAKING THE THRESHOLD

ONE OF THE GREATEST known authors of all time is Homer. His two most influential works, the epic poems the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, “provided the basis of Greek education and culture throughout the Classical age and formed the backbone of humane education down to the time of the Roman Empire and the spread of Christianity” (Kirk). An epic poem is a “long narrative poem recounting heroic deeds” (Kirk). Homer included the Ancient Greek gods and goddesses in his stories as essential characters. It is pertinent for the mortals to be in the good graces of the gods and goddesses in order to live a peaceful life or even to live at all. Homer’s *Iliad* is a twenty-four book epic poem about the war between the Trojans and the Greeks. The battle began when Paris, a prince of Troy, coerced Helen to run away with him, leaving her husband and hometown behind. Menelaus, Helen’s husband, gathers Helen’s former suitors to go to Troy in pursuit of his unfaithful wife so that he can bring her back where she belongs. This poem recounts the story of the mortal’s war for Helen, as well as how the gods and goddesses form alliances and participate in the events of the battles. These relationships are widely portrayed especially in Books 5, 7, and 8. In the *Iliad*, pride is an incredibly important state in which every Greek, mortal or immortal, strive to achieve. In the world of Homeric epic, the concern for one’s own pride causes chaos to ensue which subsequently results in the breaking of the threshold between Mount Olympus and the mortal realm.

Ideally, the gods remain in Olympus, or their respective areas of the sea or Hades, and only influence the mortals and their earth when they must protect their allotted territories. However, it becomes clear that Poseidon does not just manage the affairs of the sea or Zeus of the mortal land. The gods and goddesses constantly

intervene in the lives of the humans. They, like mortals, are prideful beings that will do almost anything to protect their status. The Trojan War has divided the divinities just as much as it has separated the humans. While some allegiances are created due to personal relationships, others are established out of spite or dislike for a person or people. Athena, Hera, Poseidon, and Hermes are all in favor of a Greek victory. On the other hand, Aphrodite, Apollo, Ares, and Artemis all support the Trojans. These gods and goddesses are constantly trying to protect their mortals and give advantages to their people not just for the sake of the well-being of the humans, but to feed their pride.

In her book *The Wrath of Athena: Gods and Men in the Odyssey*, Jenny Strauss Clay examines the relationship between Odysseus and Athena in the *Odyssey*. She explains that “the wrath of Athena plays a crucial role in the overall structure and shape of the poem.” Therefore, without the repeated intervention by Athena, Odysseus’s life would not have turned out the way it was meant to be: reuniting with his wife and child in Ithaca. Although at times the actions of the gods and goddesses seem impulsive, that is not always the case. There are many instances in which the divinities have meticulously crafted their plans in order to ensure a particular outcome. For example, the first face-to-face conversation between Athena and Odysseus in the *Odyssey* occurs as Odysseus washes up on the shore of his homeland, Ithaca: “The mist which the goddess pours over the island is a trick, a *dolos* with a purpose; Athena thereby creates an opportunity to make Odysseus unrecognizable, so that no one may know him before he has punished the suitors (13.191–193), and allow her to inform him about conditions at home” (Clay 19). The gods and goddesses constantly disregard the threshold that separates them from the mortals. They are able to meddle in the lives of the humans at any given point in order to protect their pride, but can then escape back to the safety of Mount Olympus.

When the Greek hero Diomedes gets wounded in Book 5 of the *Iliad*, he prays to Athena for assistance. Hearing his prayers, Athena grants him divine strength and the ability to identify gods on the battle field, but cautions him to not challenge any divinity other than Aphrodite. Diomedes then gives in to his newfound pride and goes on a rampage with his abilities. After being injured, Aeneas’ mother, Aphrodite, comes to his aid. Diomedes then takes the opportunity to wound her as well by cutting her wrists. Upset, Aphrodite returns to Mount Olympus where her mother heals her and Zeus cautions her to stay out of warfare in the future. Not only is she physically injured, but her pride takes a hit as well. It is embarrassing

that not only the goddess of beauty now is blemished with an injury, but that it was done at the hands of a mortal. When the tides of the battle have turned, Hera and Athena receive permission from Zeus to intervene and help the Greek. Hera goes to encourage the Greek troops, while Athena rallies Diomedes. She allows him to attack other divinities other than Aphrodite, despite her initial rule. Together they challenge Ares and Diomedes successfully wounds her.

Hector and Paris, who are Trojans, continue to battle when the gods Apollo and Athena end the day and the battle in Book 6. The men attempt to continue to fight not knowing that divine intervention will conclude the battle refusing to hurt their pride by being the one whom give in. The Trojans are unsuccessful in their quest for a win. Then, Zeus intervenes by bringing nightfall and the two make a pact before going back to their camps. Both sides decide to honor their fallen comrades at the end of the day. Antenor, Prince Paris of Troy's advisor, suggests that Paris should end the war by returning Helen to her husband, Menelaus. Paris agrees to return everything he took from Sparta but Helen. By keeping Helen, his biggest prize, he protects his pride by not admitting his faults. Both sides decide to take a day to honor their dead and build protective walls around their camps.

Book 8 then begins when Zeus goes to Mount Ida after forbidding the other gods from continuing to interfere in the mortal conflicts. There he considers the course of the war, including the successes and failures of both sides. He decides to help out the Trojans by turning the tide of battle by terrifying the Greeks with lightning. Hera then fills Agamemnon's heart with war fury. In turn, Agamemnon inspires his comrades to fight and asks Zeus for a sign that they should fight back. Zeus then sends an eagle carrying a fawn. As the Greeks begin to successfully fight back, the weight shifts yet again in the favor of the Trojans as Hector drives the Greeks all the way back to their ships. Watching from Olympus, Athena and Hera are desperate to help. Zeus sends the goddess Iris with a reminder that there are consequences for interfering in the war. Realizing that their power is too inferior to Zeus, they give up. This is a huge defeat for the goddesses because it wounds their pride. Because Zeus is the king of the gods, he is not concerned with the pride of anyone but himself. Upon Zeus's return to Mount Olympus, he informs Athena and Hera that he will help the Greeks the next day by reminding them that only Achilles can cause victory for the Greeks. That night, the Trojans camp outside and light campfires in order to illuminate the path to see oncoming or escaping Greeks. The Greeks find safety in the night, but live with the potential doom of Hector's wrath.

In Book 7, Athena notices that the Greeks are losing a lot of men and being beaten in battle. In response, “She [then] went darting down from the peaks of Olympus to sacred Ilios. And Apollo sped forth to meet her, for he looked down from out of Pergamus and beheld her, and was fain to have victory for the Trojans” (7.19–21). When Athena’s pride is in jeopardy, she immediately takes action to protect herself. Because action is necessary to protect their pride, Apollo and Athena the two put their differing allegiances aside and come to a compromise that will benefit all. Apollo explains, “Let us rouse the valiant spirit of horse-taming Hector, in hope that he may challenge some one of the Danaans in single fight to do battle with him man to man in dread combat. So shall the bronze-greaved Achaeans have indignation and rouse someone to do battle in single combat against goodly Hector” (7.39–40). Together, they are able to devise a plan to stop the battle for the day in order to spare them all. This particular scene is unique because it demonstrates compromise among “warring” gods, which proves that maintaining their pride is important enough to temporarily set aside their differences in order to spare lives. Similarly, in Book 8, the gods do whatever they deem necessary to protect their own and in turn their pride. “Then once again the Olympian [Apollo] aroused might in the hearts of the Trojans; and they thrust the Achaeans straight toward the deep ditch; and amid the foremost went Hector exulting in his might” (8.335–6). Without the help of Apollo, Hector may have already met his demise. A majority of the war between mortals is not determined by the strength or the determination of the leaders, but the influence and actions of the gods and goddesses. Because of this, divine intervention becomes inevitable. Once the outcome has been tampered with, it can only be redirected by the gods; and because the end result could potentially jeopardize their pride, they will do anything that seems necessary. This process creates an endless cycle.

With the amount the gods and goddesses interfere with mortal affairs, it is impossible for their presence to go unnoticed. The humans are fully aware of the division in Mount Olympus and they accept that their fate lies in the hands of the gods. Whether it is an impossible occurrence such as super human speed or a personal connection to a divinity, the humans know that they are not the only ones on the battlefield. The chaos of Helen’s departure challenged the pride of Menelaus, therefore encouraging him to take measures to prove his ability. The disorder of the war has not only affected the humans, but the gods that support them as well. During the middle of battle “[Zeus] thundered terribly and let fly his white lightning-bolt, and down before the horses of Diomedes he hurled it to earth; and

a terrible flame arose of burning sulphur, and the two horses, seized with terror, cowered beneath the car. Then from the hands of Nestor slipped the shining reins, and he waxed afraid at heart” (8.134–6). By allowing the excitement of war to create chaos, a challenge to their pride, the gods take action in the most effective way possible: breaking the threshold and going to the mortal world. Such turmoil has established unique circumstances in which the impossible becomes possible.

In Book 5, Diomedes receives divine aid from Athena and the ability to discern divinities on the battlefield as well as superhuman strength. Despite Athena’s warning to only pursue the weakest divinity, Aphrodite, “he come upon [Ares] as he pursued her through the great throng, then the son of great-souled Tydeus thrust with his sharp spear and leapt upon her, and wounded the surface of her delicate hand, and forthwith through the ambrosial raiment that the Graces themselves had wrought for her the spear pierced the flesh upon the wrist above the palm and forth flowed the immortal blood of the goddess” (5.330–40). With his new powers given to him by Athena, Diomedes, a mere mortal, is able to do the impossible: wound a god. The pressure that chaos puts on one’s pride has allowed for such a unique occurrence to happen. This type of situation is so uncommon that embracing this turmoil is acceptable. This war has become chaotic: a mortal is able to wound a divinity not once but twice. Shortly after wounding Ares, Diomedes takes on Aphrodite. The goddess explains to her mother, “Tydeus’ son, Diomedes high of heart, wounded me, for that I was bearing forth from out the war my dear son Aeneas, who is in my eyes far the dearest of all men. For no longer is the dread battle one between Trojans and Achaeans” (5.375–80). Similarly, in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus assesses that the chaos of his situation is too great and he must do whatever is necessary to be successful. As Clay explains, “Odysseus needs Athena... He pretended to be the loser in the contest of wits between them in order to use her and that power which is exclusively divine” (208). Odysseus realizes that his alliance with Athena is more valuable than his pride. This is an extremely rare situation because the Greeks value pride over everything. Greek warriors aspire to die honorably in war so their legacy will be remembered fondly. While cowards that decide to not participate war or leave from battle are considered very dishonorable and are shunned.

Despite the fact that the gods and goddesses have allegiances with the humans, their actions are restricted and monitored by Zeus. Zeus is considered to be the father of all mortals and immortals and rules over all of the human’s earth. And he is the most powerful god of all because he was the one to overthrow Kronos,

his tyrannical father, and the Titans, demi-god monsters. Because Zeus is regarded as the all-mighty father, his rapport with the other gods is the same as with the humans: he is in charge and has the final say. Like all the other gods, his main concern is his own pride. In Book 8 of the *Iliad*, Zeus speaks to the gods in Olympus: “Whomsoever I shall mark minded apart from the gods to go and bear aid either to Trojans or Danaans, smitten in no seemly wise shall he come back to Olympus, or I shall take and hurl him into murky Tartarus, far, far away, where is the deepest gulf beneath the earth, the gates whereof are of iron and the threshold of bronze, as far beneath Hades as heaven is above earth: then shall ye know how far the mightiest am I of all gods” (8.10–16). By asserting his authority, Zeus reminds the gods and goddesses that he is indeed the father and they are his superiors or his children.

Although he has the final say, one can appeal to Zeus’s pride and encourage him to give in to the chaos and get involved. Athena, one of Zeus’s favorite children, can usually manipulate her father into helping her heroes: “With a smile spake to her Zeus the cloud-gatherer: ‘Be of good cheer, Tritogeneia, dear child. In no wise do I speak with full purpose of heart, but am minded to be kindly to thee’” (8.39–40). However, this exception does not apply to his wife, Hera. When Zeus finally puts his foot down, he cannot be persuaded by anyone: “Hera swiftly touched the horses with the lash, and self-bidden groaned upon their hinges the gates of heaven... But when father Zeus saw them from Ida he waxed wondrous wrath, and sent forth golden-winged Iris to bear a message: ‘Up, go, swift Iris; turn them back and suffer them not to come face to face with me, seeing it will be in no happy wise that we shall join in combat’” (8.395–400). Although Hera traditionally is regarded as Zeus’s peer, he still has the final say over all. Despite Zeus’s position of being the king of the mortals and the divinities, he still gives in to favoritism to maintain his pride.

However, Homer’s epic poems are not the only classical works that express the prominence of divine intervention due to protection of one’s pride. Clay explains that “the wrath of Athena against the returning Greeks was a dominant motif in these traditions” (186). Shortly after, she provides a list of other works that demonstrate this motif: “the *Sack of Troy*, and the *Returns (Nostoi)*” both by Arctinus of Miletus. Vergil’s *Aeneid* is another work that divine intervention changes the entire course of a human’s destiny. The *Aeneid* takes place after the Trojan War and follows a Trojan named Aeneas’s journey to establish Rome and Italy. Hera—who still has her bias against the Trojans due to Paris hurting her pride—does absolutely anything she can to change Aeneas’s fate. Her main goal is ensure that Aeneas is un-

able to establish in order to exact revenge about the Trojans she hate. In Book 4 of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas is on an island ruled by Queen Dido. Hera incites love in Dido's heart for Aeneas with hopes that Aeneas will stay with her and not establish Italy. Hera sends Dido, Dido's royal court, Aeneas, and his court out hunting. When Hera creates a storm "with hail, and thunder, and tempestuous rain; The fearful train shall take their speedy flight, Dispers'd, and all involv'd in gloomy night; One cave a grateful shelter shall afford, To the fair princess and the Trojan lord. I will myself the bridal bed prepare, If you, to bless the nuptials, will be there" (Vergil's *Aeneid* 4.117–128). Hera's attempt ultimately fails when another god reminds Aeneas of his destiny. After Hera realizes that she will be unable to stop Aeneas, she settles for delaying the cause. These additional examples prove that divine intervention provoked by chaos and pride is a universal theme throughout Ancient Greece.

In the world of Ancient Greece, the idea of pride consumes both immortals and mortals alike. Pride dictates the societal norms and what is considered acceptable or not. It causes Greek men to greatly lust for war in order to be able to obtain glory by being successful and dying for the cause. Similarly, the actions of gods and goddesses are also driven by pride. Some of the alliances between the mortals and immortals are due to patronage, while others are caused by grudges when they felt as if they were not properly being honored. Therefore, it is natural to expect the gods and goddesses will intervene in mortal conflict in order to protect their own. Without pride, the divinities would be less likely to have the desire to interfere with affairs that affect the lowly and disposable mortals. That threshold between the immortals in Mount Olympus and the humans on Earth can be attributed to pride. The great epic poet, Homer, expresses the need to preserve pride throughout the entirety of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. However, the *Iliad*, especially in Books 7 and 8, portrays multiple situations in which there is a divine intervention and the various actions in which the gods and goddesses perform to change the fate of the humans. Additionally, Book 5 shows that chaos not only provokes action to protect one's pride, it created situations in which there are extreme occurrences such as a mortal wounding a god. Because mortals and immortals are so concerned with maintaining their pride giving into chaos becomes almost inevitable. This turmoil reaches everyone, including Zeus, proving that this endless cycle of giving into chaos due to protection of pride and therefore breaking the threshold between the mortal and immortal realms effects everyone despite status or power. While Ancient Greek mythology constantly expresses the physical divide between the divine and mortals, it just as frequently tests the bounds of that threshold.

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# ANDREA CUEVA

Andrea Cueva is a senior with a double major in Folklore and Cultural Anthropology. She became enthralled with the motif of portals in fairy tale literature upon taking the German Folk and Fairytale class with Professor Dorothee Ostmeier and decided to pursue research on the topic in relation to the cultural phenomenon of Harry Potter.

Mentor: **Rachel Branson**

## FAIRY TALE PORTALS: GATEWAYS TO UNDERSTANDING MODERN LIFE

**MY GOAL IN THIS PAPER** is to prove the importance of the portal in fairy tale literature, specifically through Harry Potter and his entrance to Diagon Alley in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* by JK Rowling. I wanted to know whether the portals represent bigger psychological or social problems in our psyche, and whether we are cathartically dealing with our reality through the magical realities of other worlds. I chose to examine *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* because of its current cultural following and significance. With over 450 million copies of the Harry Potter books sold, £4.7 billion dollars gained in the movie box offices, and now four theme parks with Harry Potter attractions, this franchise is enormous. Coupled with the in-depth examination of the literary devices at work in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, I will discuss portals in fairytale literature as a whole, as well as discuss a study about modern-day portals and how they may influence our lives.

Why study Harry Potter? It is a world with magic, which is something many people in our reality crave. In fact, it is so deeply desired that we have developed common colloquialisms such as, "*If I could snap my fingers and...*" This represents an ease of living, an increased quality of life, all suddenly possible through the potential of magic. But are we truly void of portals? They are in our literature; we as the literate human race have generated the concept, and have gone so far as to embrace aspects of it in our everyday speech. I argue that we live in a world with portals, just not the fantastical ones we crave.

I chose to analyze portals specifically because of personal interest, but also upon doing further research, I found that there was a dearth of scholarship on the topic. Quite seriously, there was none. I was fascinated by how this prominent and

expected motif has been overlooked by academics. I looked to Jack Zipes' writings to answer my portal-related questions within the realm of fairytale literature. Jack Zipes' book *Why Fairy Tales Stick* is the closest I came to the semblance of an answer. Funnily enough, the beginning of the answer does not come from Zipes himself but rather from Friedmar Apel. Apel says, "The creation of the fairy-tale world, the mastery of the means of a form is not an aesthetic-technical problem, but rather an ethical one, the responsibility of the poet vis à vis life" (Zipes 93). Zipes expounds on Apel's commentary, suggesting that fairy tales attach to readers as memes, and that authors have an ethical implication not to play too much to our utopian dreams, thereby leaving us disappointed with our own reality upon the closing of the book. Zipes refers to Dan Sperber who, in his book *Explaining Culture*, discusses coded information within culture, and how it affects us. Within fairy tales, he says, there is encoded information that allows the reader to better understand and process the world around them. He says that through reading fairy tales and understanding right and wrong through the lens of natural law, we can then better expose or conceal problematic pieces of our very real social reality. Ethically, this means an author potentially has a long-lasting influence on their readers, and can in fact change how they see and interact with the world outside of their book.

A portal is defined as a passage across a threshold. In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and many other fairy tales, portals bridge the gaps between the dual realities of the social and magical realities. Social reality can be described as the "normal" everyday world, ruled by the "Social Law" we live in, created and maintained solely by humans to produce order and control in our society. Magical reality is the realm that contains forms of magic and functions under "Natural Law." Natural law, similar to karma in our social reality, is the idea that truth and goodness is supported by an ethereal system of balance that will prevail in the end, and is a constant factor in the fairy tales that we are all familiar with. The world of Harry Potter, as can be expected with fairy tale literature, functions wholly under this motif. For instance, readers know from the first moment the book begins who our protagonist will be. The kindhearted child under the stairs is innocent and good-natured but does not possess the knowledge or power to defend himself. Like a modern Cinderella, he doesn't deserve this life or inhumane treatment and to counter the unjust acts, and we subconsciously know that Natural Law will come to right the wrongdoings of his aunt and uncle, the Dursleys. Natural Law not only extends to the protagonist, but also affects and influences every character in a story, regardless of moral standing. The first glimpse of the workings of

Natural Law in *Sorcerer's Stone* comes with the introduction of Hagrid when he removes Harry from the dismal Dursley environment. Here Hagrid acts as an agent of Natural Law, stealing Harry away for a better life and providing the first glimpse of magical justice when leaving Dudley with a brand new pig's tail.

Traditionally in stories social and magical realities must coexist. In Harry Potter's case, he is permitted to use magic at Hogwarts and in specific areas of the wizarding (magical) world, but he is not permitted to use magic in the muggle (non-magical) world, and especially not in front of an actual muggle. JK Rowling presents the wizarding world and the muggle world in such a way that when reading or watching the Harry Potter series, it feels more like Harry is divided between two very different cultures rather than two aspects of reality. Harry continues to fit the traditional literary experience of these two realities because he is not simply allowed access to the wizarding world without returning to the muggle world. He returns to his social reality every summer, but grows psychologically, becoming better equipped to deal with the unjust and inhumane treatment from the Dursleys, because he knows now that it is not his only option, nor his fate, to exist solely there.

In *Sorcerer's Stone*, the entrance to Diagon Alley appears first in chapter five. Harry is at Hagrid's side, an observer to the appearance of the portal. JK Rowling makes this portal's appearance a type of portal "inception." The parts of the paragraph that deal with the initial entrance to Diagon Alley are divide the social and magical realities by the use of exaggerated dashes:

[Hagrid] tapped the wall three times with the point of his umbrella. The brick he had touched quivered—it wriggled—in the middle, a small hole appeared—it grew wider and wider—a second later they were facing an archway large enough even for Hagrid.  
(Rowling 71)

According to Zipes, specific literary techniques such as dashes act as biological stimuli. The stimuli itself are external to the organism, us. We then make assumptions based on this stimuli. The paragraph in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* that contains the portal exists for the most part in the social reality. The marvelous reality is kept within the dramatic dashes. When unnatural things begin to happen in the "normal" social world, they are noted by the dashes and the words between, as though we are seeing through Harry's surprised eyes. He is observing a brick wall and Hagrid takes an otherwise ordinary umbrella and taps the wall. In the social reality, he would simply look like an oddball, tapping a brick wall with an

umbrella. However, this brick wall was in fact a portal, and this portal shifts and moves instead of staying still and ordinary. The stone wriggled, or as JK Rowling put, “—it wriggled—” and after the hole appeared, Harry was further startled, evident in Rowling’s following dashes, “—it grew wider and wider—” and as the archway became evident, his completion of the passage to the marvelous reality was complete (71). Hagrid completed this portal’s appearance and passage with this simple statement; “‘Welcome,’ said Hagrid, ‘to Diagon Alley’” (71).

When Harry passes through this brick wall to Diagon Alley, he moves through a portal dividing the social (muggle) and magical (wizarding) realities with Hagrid as his guide. Here, Hagrid acts as a magical agent, which, as explained by Propp in *Morphology of the Folktale* acts as a function in the story, in this case catalyzing Harry’s introduction to the wizarding world, thus setting the stage for the rest of the Harry Potter franchise (Propp 18). Typically, a hero receives a magical agent after performing a good deed or proves his morally virtuous nature in trying times when he believes he is unobserved. Harry earns his magical agent, Hagrid, as a type of reward for navigating a difficult environment: being raised at the Dursleys. Hagrid is the most special kind of magical agent because he gives Harry the gift of earned loyalty and aid, not merely an object or trinket. This loyalty continues without fail through the seven books. Hagrid acts as a portal of information and accessibility as well as insight for Harry, Ron, and Hermione. The information he gives these three always sets a stage, changes a viewpoint, or provides answers that otherwise are unreachable. The first example we see of Hagrid providing a portal is the one in Diagon Alley, but it is not the last.

Harry’s first portal appeared, and with it the first introduction to a seemingly plausible world that exists alongside ours, a world that contains magic and can still coexist with the social reality with which we are so familiar. In the wizarding culture in Harry Potter’s world, portals are commonplace. Hagrid’s umbrella tap is only the first example of an opening of a portal followed by countless others such as floo powder used to teleport in fireplaces, port keys, platform 9  $\frac{3}{4}$ , flying cars, portals in prophecy, portals in memory, the mirror of Erised, the portal to the afterlife that Sirius falls through, and so on. Harry’s world is rich with portals, while ours is void of them.

We desperately want portals that prove magic exists in our world. As the Mad Hatter says in the show *Once Upon A Time*, “You know what the issue is with this world? Everyone wants a magical solution to their problem, and everyone refuses to believe in magic” (OUAT, S. 1 Ep. 17). Our understanding of magic has

changed in the last 100 years. What we now consider commonplace, other humans in other times would consider resolutely magical. Technology currently acts as our closest advancement towards portals. The computer screen is a portal to information, people, news, and family. A television with a gaming console is a portal to countless virtual worlds, able to be explored with long-distance friends and other random players. Smartphones are hand-held, convenient, and accessible, and is the culmination of all communication possibilities currently available. Like all things technological, it is quickly evolving. There is immediacy without limitation that we are granted and have come to expect with technology. This vast digital universe dwelling behind our screens is much like the magical world behind that brick wall in Diagon Alley. We have the comforts of a portal and the connections we desire, but still not in the way we desire them. The immediacy we have with technology is never quite immediate enough. We always want more, always want to inch closer and closer to the magic we cannot seem to find. Harry's world has developed methods of improving ways to make everyday life simpler through the use of magic. We want this simplicity and this convenience for ourselves and our world. Most notably, the wizarding world functions as effectively as it does because of the use of portals. Portals in the wizarding world increase quality of life, shorten commutes to work, help people better understand fate, and help to better retain and share memories.

Our culture, too, like Harry's, is overtly dependent on our portals. But are they entirely helpful? Are we solely benefitting from them, or do they come with a mixed bag of side effects? Recently there have been jokes about the zombie apocalypse taking place because people turn into zombie-like versions of themselves, oblivious to their surroundings, when engrossed in their smartphones. As a result, social settings are altered. This borderline obsessive phone use is reflected in the lessons of Rowling's *Mirror of Erised*, which itself is a nod to the Greek myth of Narcissus. These phone-obsessed people, much like wizards with the mirror, slowly waste away in front of their devices, captivated by a false ideal instead of their comparably mediocre reality. The abuse of this otherwise valuable portal alters our understanding of the human experience, crippling our ability to have rich interpersonal moments with our loved ones. The increase in depression and anxiety, specifically in the millennial generation, is a dramatic result of this portal misuse. A 2013 study published on PLOS says that today's modern portals, specifically Facebook, increases depression in its users. The exact terminology they use is that Facebook creates a decline in "subjective well-being," where the perceived overall

quality of their daily lives, both internal and externally, is effected.

While Harry Potter is not the ultimate perpetrator of the ideal of a magical self-discovery process, it does serve as a widely absorbed example, and one that is so prevalent that the books are now translated into over 68 languages. There must be a reason we are drawn to this story. Our portals surround us to the point of over stimulation, but we forget that these portals are only windows, offering a limited view, and sometimes even false promises. As much as technology attempts to consume our every sense and understanding of life, we will never be in the reality portrayed on the computer screen, or *in* the magical world in the pages of a book. Furthermore, these portals allow others access to the same viewpoint into *our* personal lives, in the exact same way we see the lives of others. But do we truly post every single thing that happens in our lives online? No, of course not. People post what is pretty, presentable, and positive to depict the best parts of their lives. We do not see their life behind closed doors. This superficiality is robbing us of the depth of relationships that comes from actually taking the time to learn about a person. Our “subjective well-being,” as PLOS put it, is compromised through the constant comparison of the nitty-gritty in-depth understanding of our lives with the highlight reel of someone else’s. Our portals exist. However, if upon further introspection we are personally misusing these gateways to other worlds and in fact are damaging parts of ourselves, it may be time to reevaluate our individual choices and actions.

Instead of using Facebook as a scapegoat for our otherwise mundane lives, or reading Harry Potter and other fantasy literature as an escape from our corrupt social reality, these outlets have the ability to be used as an incredible resource. Perhaps they could be better used as catalyst for communication and introspection into our inherent knowledge that we as a people deserve better from our environment, allowing us to procure our deepest desires and wishes for ourselves in a obtainable and approachable way. Condemning or judging Facebook, and portals in general, in this instance is not useful. My overarching goal is merely the opportunity to increase awareness of our intake of pop culture, new and old alike. We individually must decide how we use or abuse the modern and literary portals available to us.

As for how Harry Potter may act as a literary portal that influences our perceptions of reality, there are countless stories of people waiting for their letters to Hogwarts and being horrendously disappointed when their eleventh birthday came and passed without their Hogwarts acceptance letter. In fact, Aunt Petunia

herself expresses jealousy for her sister who got a letter to Hogwarts on her birthday, whereas Petunia did not. When one falls in love with a fantastical world that can only be reached through words or some “movie magic,” it is all too easy to want to bring some of the magic of that book or film back to our lives in earnest. This portal, in the form of the multi-billion dollar Harry Potter franchise, is indeed achieving a long-lasting effect on our minds and hearts. Our social reality is corrupt and bereft of Natural Law to come convict the culprits of daily injustices both big and small. It is nearly impossible to avoid being enthralled with a reality that affords its protagonists this advantage.

Fairy tales and their portals are not a thing of the past. As Jack Zipes notes, with the increase in global literacy, there are more people who read fairy tales. On top of that, the way we share fairy tales has evolved dramatically. We share fairy tales through “books, hypertext for the Internet, advertisements for commodities, scripts for films, radio, and television, comics, [and] cartoons.” (Zipes 93) The cultural relevance of fairy tales is only skyrocketing, not becoming antiquated. This means for us that portals are also increasing in their relevance and demand. Without extensive analysis into portals as a motif, portals in literature, and portals in our daily lives, we are at a disadvantage when dealing socially with both a literary and technological expectation. Harry uses the portals to better his quality of life, while our great psychological accomplishment with modern day portals is escaping to an imaginary dimension. Perhaps we should start paying attention and find a way to experience and embrace the reality we actually live in.

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# ANNA FITTING

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Winner of the *NOMAD* Prize for Excellence in Undergraduate Scholarship

Mentor: **Dr. Andréa Gilroy**

## THE SILENT BORDER: REPRESSION AND PROGRESSION IN *SILENT HILL 2*

A MAN LOOKS AT HIS REFLECTION in a derelict bathroom. He emerges to gaze out over a fog-covered lake. The road is blocked, and he must go the rest of the way by foot. There is no going back. He holds a dead woman's letter. With this, the stage is set for seminal horror game *Silent Hill 2*, which opens with the protagonist James Sunderland driving after receiving a letter from his wife, Mary, telling him to meet him in the town of Silent Hill, despite the fact she had died of a terminal illness three years prior. As he approaches he town, James reveals that Mary died of an unspecified disease, though flashbacks show Mary has a chronic cough. The game builds up his grief and trauma until finally revealing that James himself killed Mary by smothering her because he could not stand her slow death anymore. James, however, has been in denial about it. The second installment of the *Silent Hill* video game franchise, *Silent Hill 2*, carries on the series' tradition of its surreal titular setting and deeply psychological horror. These games pull their protagonist out of the normal world and place them in Silent Hill, a town full of monsters shaped by the unconscious of those around them. James is forced to come to terms with the guilt of his wife's murder by having to progress through Silent Hill, while at the same time the player is forced to progress through the game of *Silent Hill 2* to discover the truth. Thus the setting's threshold is twofold: the Silent Hill that James must move through to undo his repression, and the *Silent Hill* that represses the truth of the story until the player progresses far enough.

The first step towards James's revelation is his removal from the regular



world to the liminal and other worldly location of Silent Hill. Though James clearly goes to the location of the Silent Hill of his memory, the Silent Hill he visits during the game is a twisted version. A thick blanket of fog covers the entire town, which restricts the player's view beyond a few feet. Thus both the player and James are both constantly moving into the unknown. The town is uninhabited, save for a few bloody bodies James finds, and the buildings are in a general state of disrepair. As the player progresses, however, the town becomes inhabited by strange monsters that all attempt to attack James. Thus the town is clearly an uncanny experience, as Sigmund Freud famously defines the term as "that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (Freud 124). The town relies on James' familiarity with it and twists it in order to create a purgatory-like experience for him.

The town even drives this other-and-yet-familiar atmosphere home by bringing in a sense of the abject: one of the early sections of the game requires the player to find a key to proceed to the next section, which is located next to a bloody corpse. This is the ultimate abjection: the corpse is not only a grotesque reflection of the self in terms of general form, but in this case in literal appearance. While normally the corpse forces one to face the border between the living body and death (Kristeva 3), this particular corpse also brings up the borders of identity. The transgression of the abject becomes not only a matter of body and self, but also one of identity. The question is not simply "is that human?" but also "is that James?" Likewise, this encounter forces us to ask "who is the player?" since their role of piloting James is called into question if a second "James" appears.

In addition to the uncanny and abject, this world also displays impossible spatial relations. While in the Silent Hill Historical building, James must jump down a number of seemingly bottomless holes which somehow leads him to the Toluca Prison. The prison, based on this entrance, should somehow be deep underground, yet it has an exterior courtyard with grass and an open, though dark, sky. Silent Hill also inexplicably changes into an even more dilapidated, hellish other world. The only warning of this change for the player is the sound of sirens as the town transforms. The walls in this world are stained with a reddish substance, either rust or blood or perhaps both, and are sometimes covered with sheets or show signs of water damage, all aspects missing from the empty, foggy version of Silent Hill. Thus Silent Hill is clearly no benign town, but some space outside of or between more the more rational, lucid real world.

As the player progresses through town, they encounter a series of monsters

that attack James/the player. These monsters are not simply bizarre, but also reflect elements of James' subconscious. The first monster that the player encounters is a creature called the "Lying Figure." (The monster's names don't appear in *Silent Hill 2*. Instead, these names come from a section of the Japanese version of the *Silent Hill 3 Guidebook*, called "Lost Memories", which include extra information about the series.) It resembles a faceless human with its arms trapped within its flesh, as if in a straightjacket. Its flesh is covered with lesions and has a generally diseased pallor (see Fig. 1), while constantly writhing within its flesh restraints, and walks with an uneven gait. Its pallor and wounds, in addition to its overall twisted fleshy



Figure 1

appearance, evokes images of disease and poor health. Its movements, though also emphasizing its restrained nature, also appear like the writhing of someone in pain, a sense of physical ailment that is further emphasized by its dizzy gait. Even its secondary motions evoke the image of a cockroach, a creature associated with filth and the spread of disease, an image further aided by the hissing noise it makes. To top it off, this enemy spits acid when the player comes to close, which is both similar to vomiting and also parallels Mary's cough.

However, the Lying Figure is only the first enemy type to appear that brings along imagery of illness. Another monster, which resembles a nurse and appears later in the game, is clearly drawn from the experience of Mary's extended stay in the hospital. Even the image of the hospital returns in the form of Brookhaven Hospital, a location James and the player must pass through. The hospital, one

of the largest areas of the game, is likewise full of unsettling imagery: abandoned and rusted gurneys on cracks floors, stained mattresses stacked in piles, narrow hallways full of broken or locked doors that are patrolled by the nurse monsters with twitching heads. The other world version is even worse, with blood strained walls and doors covered by sheets that lead into rooms complete covered in stained sheets filled with monsters. These images—hospital hallways, mattresses and gurneys, blood and bed sheets, nurses roaming the halls—are images James would be familiar with from Mary's time in the hospital. These reoccurring images are not coincidence, but rather remind James of his guilt about the outcome of Mary's illness.

These monsters and horror locations are not designed simply to appear frightening, though they do create a sense of unease and repulsion in general in the player. Rather, their designs are clearly tied in more directly to James' subconscious. Consider a common enemy found in other *Silent Hill* games, the dog monster, which appears as some form of grotesque dog, often skinned and bloody, or with a split head. This enemy is clearly effectively scary, given its reoccurrence in many other games in the series, yet it doesn't appear in *Silent Hill 2*. Because the dog does not serve as a reminder of James' guilt, it has no place in the *Silent Hill* James visits. *Silent Hill* is catered to those who visit, and though the dog might suit another protagonist, it hardly suits James. His fears lie in the image of the sickly and the hospital nurse, not the dog.

A number of enemies do not fit into the illness theme, but instead seem to draw off of sexual imagery. Though never explicitly stated, the presence of these monsters imply guilt for sexual frustration in James, stemming from his wife's long illness preventing fulfillment of his sexual desires. The nurse monster, as mentioned before, shows illness imagery by its appearance as a nurse and its proximity to the hospital area, but also evokes sexual energy. The nurse wears a classic nurse's hat and uniform, all in hospital white, but also has a thin feminine figure, with an outfit that has a low neckline to show off its cleavage, and a very short skirt. The juxtaposition of its sexual imagery, in addition to its grotesque faceless head and dirty, bloodstained clothes, make it both sexually appealing as well as repulsive at the same time, something that is almost abject in its grotesque body and yet sexually appealing figure.

Consider also the Mannequin, a creature made up of two sets of smooth, sleek legs joined at a torso (see Fig. 2). The events of its first appearance are also notable. In Room 205 of the Woodside Apartments, James encounters a normal mannequin wearing a dress that is clearly the same dress as Mary wears in the pho-

to of her James carries. A flashlight is pinned to the dress, shining directly at James when he approaches it. Once the player picks up the flashlight, the mannequin monster suddenly appears behind the mannequin with the dress to attack James. Because the mannequin's appearance is only triggered by the player's interaction with the image of Mary, the mannequin becomes tied to Mary and the idea of punishment for James's treatment of his wife. In addition, though it is most notable in the case of the Mannequin, both it and the Nurse appear shiny, as if slick with some kind of fluid, something that only enhances their visceral sexuality.



Figure 2

There is also Maria, who clearly serves to force James to face his guilt about Mary. Maria looks identical to Mary, though Mary dresses in a conservative white blouse, while Maria dresses in a short skirt and revealing red top. Maria possesses Mary's memories, but is more flirtatious and temperamental than Mary. Maria also appears to be supernatural, as she dies and inexplicably returns back to life multiple times. For example, she is murdered by Pyramid Head in the hospital, but appears again alive and well in a cell in the labyrinth in Toluca Prison. In addition, *Silent Hill 2* contains a short side game outside of the main narrative, a "sub scenario" named *Born from a Wish*, in which the player controls Maria. (This narrative exists in the special edition *Silent Hill: Restless Dreams* (as the North American release is called) and re-release *Silent Hill HD Collection*. In these versions, the main game is called *Letters from Silent Heaven*, and the two parts make up *Silent Hill 2*.)

This scenario implies Maria is a creation of Silent Hill, giving her no past and causing her to question her purpose before she runs into James. In other words, she exists simply to remind James of his guilt about Mary.

Throughout the game, Silent Hill seems to be created just for James and it caters to his subconscious. However, the player's brief experiences with other characters reinforce that the town is constructed uniquely for each of its visitors. (Other games in the series follow the same trend, with different imagery for each protagonist. The most extreme cases of this are *Silent Hill: Downpour* and *Silent Hill:*



Figure 3: James faces the Abstract Daddy while Angela cowers. Note the pistons in the walls.

*Shattered Memories*, with water/rain and ice imagery, respectively, instead of rust and blood.) The most explicit comes in the form of Angela Orosco, who James first meets when he enters Silent Hill, and encounters again a few times over the course of the game. Just as James is burdened by the loss of his wife and his denial of his own guilt, Angela is clearly burdened by some trauma. She verbally lashes out at James with little warning, and expresses suicidal tendencies. In one scene, she contemplates using a knife until James takes the knife from her. Eventually, James learns from a newspaper clipping found in the labyrinth that Angela killed her father and brother who both sexually abused her. Following this, James finds her in a room with walls that seem to be covered or made out of some kind of

fleshy material, with pistons pumping in and out of holes in the walls in a way that evokes sexual penetration. Angela is attacked by a monster called the “Abstract Daddy” that resembles a vaguely human form on a rectangular shape of a door or bed (see Fig 3).

James later meets Angela in the hotel, finding her on a burning staircase. As they talk, James says “It’s hot as hell in here”, to which Angela replies: “You see it, too? For me, it’s always like this.” Up until this point, Silent Hill has had a grimy, dark, and occasionally even fleshy appearance which appears similar to a hospital, so this radical departure in both enemy design and room appearance shows the extent in which Angela influences the Silent Hill in these scenes, not James.

If Silent Hill truly caters to whoever sees it in such a detailed manner, then the obvious question becomes *why*? At the time of his arrival to Silent Hill, James is still in denial about his role in Mary’s death, and the player is unaware of the true cause of her death. It’s only during his time in Silent Hill that he is slowly able to accept his guilt and the player learns the truth, culminating in him viewing a tape that includes footage of him smothering Mary. All the small aspects Silent Hill lifts from James’ mind regarding Mary and his guilt—the imagery of illness, the sexuality of the monsters, the appearance of Maria—are ways of forcing James to confront the truth. And yet, of all these monsters, the most directly tied to James’s guilt is Pyramid Head, who is also James’s primary antagonist. The monster resembles a man with an enormous red metal triangle on its head who reappears throughout the game to pursue James. In early appearances, Pyramid Head drags an enormous knife. This item can later be acquired and equipped like any other weapon. However, when the player equips it, James drags the knife, even though he holds all other equipped weapons normally. This item, called the Great Knife, is symbolic of a heavy burden, particularly the burden of murder. Because Pyramid Head is heavily associated with violence, as he attacks other monsters, the only monster to do this, the Great Knife is associated with the burden of murder.

The form of denial James uses bears a striking resemblance to the Freudian concept of repression. James denies his involvement in Mary’s death to the point he forgets about it, even losing track of time and becoming willing to follow as bizarre a lead as Mary’s letter. This is reminiscent of Micheal Billig’s description of repression:

The idea of self-deceit, or willed forgetting, forms the basis for the Freudian concept of repression. If we have secrets from ourselves, then not only must we forget the secrets, but we must also forget that we have forgotten them.

To use Freudian terminology, the secrets must be repressed: and the fact that we are repressing them must also be repressed. (13)

Perhaps the first clue of this idea of self-deceit in the game comes in the opening cut scene, which involves Mary's letter and James approaching Silent Hill. Mary's letter, as it is in the voiceover, reads: "In my restless dreams, I see that town. Silent Hill. You promised you'd take me there again someday. But you never did. Well, I'm alone there now, in our 'special place'. Waiting for you..." (*Silent Hill 2*). James admits that it's ridiculous for him to think this is actually from Mary, because she is dead, and yet he still finds himself looking for her. From this scene there is already a sense of unease: Mary's letter seems aware that she's already dead, as she acknowledges James never takes her to Silent Hill again, as if it became too late to do so. In addition, the player is likely to be familiar enough with the series to know that Silent Hill seems like a strange location for a vacation or a 'special place', and thus James and Mary's apparent habit to go there is bizarre or sinister.

Yet the most bizarre is James' reaction. If he is aware of Mary's death, how can he possibly think she might be alive? Clearly, this is only possible because of the denial he is in. He has forgotten her murder, and thus forgotten the details of Mary's death enough to doubt. The fact that the ending gives a longer version of Mary's letter, in which she is simply writing a final goodbye to James before her inevitable death, only proves this. This true version of the letter is only given to him after he accepts his guilt, thus is a symbol of the end of his denial, and the knowledge he was in denial all along.

*Silent Hill 2* goes beyond the basic representation of Freudian repression. In trying to reconcile the issues of approaching Freudian repression, Simon Boag writes, "A particular difficulty for any satisfactory explanation is coming to grips with Freud's claim that repression involves what he refers to as "being afflicted with that blindness of the seeing eye [...] which entails somehow both knowing and not knowing the repressed" (Boag xiii). The particular aspects of Freudian repression manifest in the relationship between James's guilt and the monsters. Though James represses the knowledge of the murder, he is constantly reminded of Mary through the symbolism of the monsters. Thus James's denial of the guilt is not simple denial, but such complete and full repression that it manifests in his unconscious, which the town preys upon to create the monsters.

The penultimate boss battle of the game is not one but two Pyramid Heads, one for each of the people James has killed: Mary and Eddie, another character in Silent Hill that attacked James. The two Pyramid Heads kill Maria once James

arrives. Upon seeing this, James falls to his knees and says: "I was weak. That's why I needed you... Needed someone to punish me for my sins... But that's all over now... I know the truth... Now it's time to end this" (*Silent Hill 2*). James admits that, despite his denial, he had a subconscious desire to be punished for his actions, which is why *Silent Hill* tormented him the way it did. Now that he has thrown off his denial and accepted the truth, he can finally face the Pyramid Heads. These enemies, unlike all other boss battles in the game, cannot be killed by the player. Rather, after some time and sustaining some damage, the Pyramid Heads end the battle by impaling themselves. Pyramid Head, the symbol of guilt, is burdened by its knife and enormous metal head. The actions cannot be undone, and the guilt cannot be destroyed, only accepted. James has accepted what he has done. Thus Pyramid Head has no more need to exist and kills itself. At this point James proceeds to face the final boss, which varies depending on which "ending" the player achieves.

Yet the most interesting aspect of James' guilt is the need for progress to obtain it, a relationship intrinsic to the form that effects the very nature of the story. The revelation of Mary's murder comes in one of the last sections of the game, meaning that the player is required to progress through the game in order to reach this truth. Unlike in other media, where information like this is gated by time, location within a text, or even context, the gate within a video game is composed of challenges that the player must complete successfully. Thus, information is reliant on player input and ability. There is no way to skip forward to the revelation, as the game mechanics require the player to follow a set path through the town and the story before reaching the scene of the revelation. James struggles to move through *Silent Hill* towards his goal, but the player struggles along with him. The trial given by *Silent Hill* is both James' and the player's, since James can only act if the player makes him act. Every encounter with an enemy is a new obstacle which the player must overcome in some way.

The aspect of player choice is particularly interesting in this regard, because for most normal enemies the player can choose to fight the monsters or run from them. Most forms of progression in the game are in the form of puzzles, so fighting the monsters is optional. In addition, *Silent Hill 2's* fighting controls are obtuse and awkward, with slow attacks that can be difficult to aim, which adds a degree of difficulty to every fight. This style of clunky controls is likely intentional, as it occurs in many of the other *Silent Hill* series games. Awkward or finicky controls are even common in other games of the survival horror genre. Regardless of intentionality,



this provides an extra degree of threat to the monsters, and in the case of *Silent Hill 2*, even adds extra incentive for the players to run from fights rather than engage. These controls are common within the genre to emphasize the tension and sense of helplessness, as well as the threat of enemies. While a game more in the action horror genre might have smoother controls, a game in the survival horror genre rarely has smooth controls, which, combined with limited resources like ammunition, increase the danger of every enemy encounter and emphasize the struggle for survival. These kinds of controls in *Silent Hill 2* also serve to bring the player's goals and James' goals together: while the monsters torment James because of their relationship to his guilt and the threat they pose to him, the player also has a visceral reaction of fear.

The game integrates the form of the video game into its story and experience. The form begins to affect the story, even down to the controls. James' story involves a motion through Silent Hill, travelling through various locations in order to make it to the next location, and the act of telling the story requires the player to overcome challenges in order to progress through the game. The story and the act of experiencing the story both involve movement through something—through the town for James, and through the various levels of the game for the player. James enters Silent Hill, moves through it, and exits once he learns the truth and begins to reconcile it. The player moves through the game, only able to finish the story once they have successfully navigated all the levels and beaten all the challenges. Just as a door requires movement through it, not around it, to reach the other side, both James and the player must move through Silent Hill in order to reach the other side, the ending. The only escape from Silent Hill is to move through it, both in James's motion through to discover the truth and the player to progress to escape it. Ultimately, Silent Hill is a liminal space, and nothing can be finished until one moves out of it.

Yet the game itself has another threshold within it. The conclusion of the game, and even the final boss, are dependent upon the player's actions. There are four primary endings the player can achieve; regardless of endings, the final boss is always a twisted version of Maria or Mary. A player achieves the "In Water" ending by rarely checking up on Maria, listening fully to voice overs about Mary in the final hallway before the final boss, frequently looking at Mary's photo in the inventory, examining the knife taken from Angela, and rarely healing. In this ending, the final boss is Mary, and after defeating her James commits suicide by driving his car into the water. Another ending, "Maria," occurs if the player regularly checks

up on Maria, does not allow her to take damage from enemies, and moves quickly through the final hallway to avoid the voice over. In this ending, James leaves Silent Hill with Maria, though she ominously coughs. Perhaps the only somewhat happy ending, "Leave," occurs if the player keeps health high, checks Mary's photo and listens to the final hallway conversation, but ignores Maria. In this ending, James leaves with Laura, a young girl he runs into in Silent Hill who Mary had been considering adopting. The last ending, "Rebirth", involves collecting a variety of items that are only available in a second play-through. While this is not unusual in games, in this context it holds a degree of denial in of itself: the player must be unsatisfied in some part by the first play through and ending, and attempt to redo it in order to achieve something better: a refusal to accept the truth similar James'. In this ending, James kills Maria and rows across the lake to take Mary's body to a church to try and resurrect her. The endings are all dependent on the actions of the player, and thus the story is in a state of limbo until the player actually plays the game, or replays it.

Regardless of ending, James' ultimate end is to reconcile his guilt: either to move on from it, give into it, or attempt to reverse it. Yet in all endings he crosses the threshold from denial into understanding. However, it is only the player that brings him across to his future, whatever that may be. The story is incomplete without the player and can only cross over into being completed once the player has caused a certain ending. Thus the liminality of the game's form serves only to emphasize James' nature as a subject that must undergo change through Silent Hill. Even the choice of form is perhaps a means of crossing a threshold by taking classic horror film imagery mixed with Freudian ideas of repression and guilt and utilizing them in such a new medium as video games. James' story could function in a different form, and yet the chosen form elevates it to a new level of meaning by being so interactive, thus including the player and emphasizing the need for forward motion.

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# BRANDY GRAHAM

Brandy Graham is a sophomore majoring in English and minoring in Comparative Literature. She is interested in both contemporary novels and feminist theoretical readings. Through studying the effect of the male gaze on cinema, she became interested in its effects within novels.

Mentor: **Elizabeth Howard**

## THE THRESHOLD OF IDENTITY: INTERNALIZING THE MALE GAZE IN JOHN GREEN'S *PAPER TOWNS*

JOHN GREEN'S NOVEL *PAPER TOWNS* (2008) follows the perspective of Quentin, a teenage boy. Quentin has been in love with his neighbor, Margo, ever since they were children. Margo and Quentin were good friends as children but drifted apart as they grew up. When the novel begins, they are seniors in high school and never talk until Margo shows up at Quentin's house one night. She takes him on a series of adventures and Quentin helps Margo to get revenge on some of their classmates. The next day Margo runs away, leaving behind a series of clues specifically for Quentin. While these clues are for Quentin, they are not meant to show him where Margo is, only that she is okay. However, Quentin is so in love with her that he is not willing to stop searching for her until he can find her. Through his following of her clues and looking for her, Quentin is searching for a specific idea of who he believes her to be. Quentin idealizes Margo and thinks of her as existing completely for his own benefit and bases his entire search for her around the idea that it is his quest to find and save Margo.

Quentin's inaccurate perceptions of Margo continually guide him throughout his search. Through his assumptions about Margo, Quentin maintains all of the power in their relationship. He is able to view her as he pleases and does not allow the room for Margo to speak for herself. Laura Mulvey discusses this power dynamic where male spectators maintain all the power over the females that they view in her article "Narrative Pleasure and Visual Cinema." She mentions that movies are created with the purpose of pleasing a male spectator. She asserts that in films, women exist for the sole purpose of being viewed by men. She goes

on to mention that everything that the women on screen do is for the purpose of the male viewer: “The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly” (Mulvey 837). While Mulvey is talking about the dynamic between the male spectator and female spectacle in terms of film, the same theory of the male gaze can be applied to novels as well. Her theory can be seen within *Paper Towns*, through Quentin’s inability to accept Margo as her own person. He is only able to see her as a spectacle that is there to fulfill his own “phantasy” that he has placed upon her. Although Quentin maintains all of the power in his ability to view Margo, the process of the male gaze has a negative effect on him as well. While being treated as a spectacle leaves Margo without a true identity, being in the role of the spectator also leaves Quentin with a problematic identity that is tied to his pursuit of someone else and does not allow him to create his own identity away from Margo.

While Quentin believes that he knows Margo, he really only knows her in terms of who he wants her to be in his life. Rather than give her a chance to be her own person, Quentin only sees Margo as intertwined with himself so that her every purpose is connected back to him. Although Quentin and Margo have been neighbors for the majority of their lives, they are not actually friends. Quentin only regards Margo in larger-than-life terms: “My miracle was this: out of all the houses in all the subdivisions in all of Florida, I ended up living next door to Margo Roth Spiegelman” (Green 3). Quentin does not call Margo by her first name, but by her full name. Margo is the only person that Quentin calls by her entire full name. With his peers and friends, Quentin only calls them by their first names. Although Margo is his peer, she is not named in the same way. While calling Margo by her first name would suggest a sort of intimacy or friendship between the two, calling her by her full name suggests that there is distance between them. In this way, he makes Margo out to not just be his neighbor or friend but something more than a friend or even a person. Quentin continues to make Margo out to be more than human through his description of her. Quentin thinks that she is a larger-than-life “miracle” and consequently, that is the only way she is portrayed. Quentin refers to Margo as his “miracle.” By describing her this way, nothing else is known about Margo. He does not give any physical description as to what Margo looks like nor does he give a description of any of her traits. He only mentions that she is his “miracle.” While miracles are out of human control, Quentin assigns this trait to Margo. By specifically calling her his “miracle,” Quentin also sets Margo up to only exist in relation to him. He believes that who she is to him is the complete image of

who she is, even though Quentin has no way of knowing who she is on her own, or around other people.

Through how he describes Margo, Quentin has all of the power within their relationship. He can imagine an idea of Margo that exists only for him. Quentin constructs his idea of Margo not through actually talking to her but through viewing her from a distance and imagining her to be a certain way. His power resides in his ability to gaze upon her. In her article, "Reading Pleasure: Light in August and the Theory of the Gendered Gaze," Irene Visser mentions the scope in which the male gaze is in play. While Mulvey views the male gaze in terms of the direct relationship between male and female, Visser views how the male gaze plays a role in how men think of women. She asserts the male gaze as "a differentiating social and psychological formative mechanism, aligned with power and oppression" (285). The male gaze is a tool of asserting male power. Through it, a man can define a woman in any way that he wants. While Quentin is not even interacting with Margo, he has the power, through the male gaze, to control her. The male gaze goes beyond interactions between male and female and is present in how Quentin even thinks of Margo. Quentin is able to place her into his own terms through his power as the male figure. While Quentin defines her in his own terms, he does not even mention Margo's own thoughts or actions. Quentin has all of the power within the relationship because he constructs his view of Margo without considering her own ideas or expressions.

Quentin believes that he holds power over who Margo is and what she does. Even when Margo runs away and leaves Quentin's life, he still believes that she solely exists for him. Before Margo runs away, she leaves clues as to where she has gone for Quentin. While this is not the first time that Margo runs away or that she leaves clues behind, this is the first time that she has left clues for Quentin. Because she leaves clues for him, Quentin believes that Margo ran away so that he find her: "Maybe this time she wanted to be found, and to be found by me" (Green 115). Quentin continues to imagine Margo as only existing for himself. He does not give Margo the space to decide why she runs away, but decides his own reason for her. He can do this since he has the power as the male viewer to construct Margo's identity. Visser mentions that male control is a "persuasive, powerful, and engendering structure of control and dominance" (277). Quentin maintains his "control and dominance" over Margo's life by attaching her life to his. He asserts that, because she leaves clues for him, she must want Quentin to find her, rather than running

away for reasons that have nothing to do with him. Through Quentin's lens of Margo, her motives are always going to tie back to him, regardless of what Margo does.

Throughout his journey to find Margo, Quentin's search begins to harm himself as well as Margo. He becomes completely obsessed with finding her. Quentin believes that Margo is somehow his and incapable of being anything outside of that. When his search begins to take over his life, it is based off of his own misguided perceptions of Margo. His search for Margo guides him to prioritize Margo over everything else in his life. Once one of Quentin's friends mentions that Quentin may be going overboard trying to find and know Margo, given that she voluntarily left, Quentin starts to see that his priorities may be problematic. However, this does not motivate him to change his search in any way: "Maybe she deserved to be forgotten. But at any rate, I couldn't forget her" (Green 164). Quentin thinks that Margo running away is tied to him and, when he begins to realize that it was her choice to leave, it does not work with the image of Margo that he imagines that does not have any purpose outside of their relationship. He starts to see that, because she ran away, maybe she "deserved to be forgotten." To Quentin, Margo would never be as cruel to run away from him and, if that is who Margo is, then she would "deserve" to be forgotten. However, Quentin cannot admit this to himself and says that he "couldn't" forget her. No matter what Margo's plans are, Quentin's search for her comes first in his life. His quest for her is no longer just a search, but something that he cannot forget and feels compelled to do. Quentin believes that he has no choice but to follow and obsess over Margo. He has been creating his own idea of who Margo is for so long that what he is doing has become normal to him and he cannot stop doing it.

Quentin is so obsessed with his idea of Margo that it begins to take over his life and become normalized to him. In her article, "Pleasure, Pain, And The Power Of Being Thin: Female Sexuality In Young Adult Literature," Beth Younger looks at how female characters are able to assert their sexualities in societies that are dominated by ideas of the patriarchy. She goes on to discuss how the dangers of accepting the objectification that are enacted upon the women affect the society as a whole: "Characters... internalize the gaze that reinforces female objectification, and these social constructions of young women's bodies become accepted norms" (Younger 47). The male gaze affects both women and their male viewers. While women may be more directly affected, men also "internalize" the effects of the male gaze. Quentin's obsession is not healthy for him yet he still relentlessly chases Margo. He does this because it seems normal to him. Quentin feels entitled

as a male to be able to force Margo to exist for his benefit. Even when he begins to acknowledge that there may be part of Margo that “deserve[s] to be forgotten,” it is only in terms of himself. He does not mention that because Margo ran away, she wants to be forgotten, but that maybe Margo “deserved to be forgotten” by him. Quentin does not allow Margo any agency and places himself in control of her. There is nothing that can convince him that his actions may have negative effects. He just continues to idealize an idea of Margo and chase after it, regardless of how it affects Margo or if it is real or not.

While Quentin cannot grasp why Margo has ran away, Margo’s little sister, Ruthie, is the only character that seems to truly know Margo. When Quentin and his friends are trying to find clues as to where Margo is, Ruthie knows information regarding Margo and is the one that guards this information. When asked if Quentin and his friends could go into Margo’s room, Ruthie replies that “Margo doesn’t like people in her room... ‘Cept me. And sometimes Mommy” (Green 111). Not only does Ruthie guard Margo’s room, and consequently her secrets, she is the only one that is capable of doing this. She mentions that she is the only one that is consistently let into Margo’s room. By only letting Ruthie into her room, Margo asserts a trust in her sister that she does not show with anyone else. While Margo maintains a sense of detachment with Quentin by giving him clues to where she is, rather than telling him, she allows Ruthie to see all sides of her. While Margo never mentions anything of substance to Quentin or his friends, she does mention these things to Ruthie. The presence of the male gaze in Margo’s life limits how Margo can relate her experiences to the world as a whole. However, Margo can trust her experiences to her sister, a girl that does not have same expectations for her as other people do.

Although Margo never indicates that she wants to be found, Quentin believes he is doing what she wants him to do in searching for her. Because his search for her takes on a life of its own and is not directly laid out for him, Quentin finds things out about Margo that force him to confront the idea that his version of who Margo is may not be an complete image. While Quentin imagines that his quest for Margo is a beautiful adventure, his expectations do not match up with what is really in front of him. The search ends at a beat up and abandoned store, where Margo is nowhere to be found. Through following Margo’s clues, Quentin ends up in “a place you go to die” (Green 139). The picture of what Margo leaves behind conflicts with the picture of what Quentin expects to find. He mentions “how terribly [he] had misunderstood both her game and the prize for winning it” (140). He



views the search for Margo as a “game,” where the prize is getting to be with her. He builds up an idealized image of who Margo is and cannot associate that image with the image of death that she leaves behind for him.

Although the abandoned warehouse is the last clue that Margo leaves for Quentin, he does not stop searching for Margo. He begins to invasively look into everything that Margo left behind with the hope that these things will help him to find her. Once he does find Margo, she mentions that her clues ended at the abandoned storefront. Before she left the storefront, she purposefully and thoughtfully cleans and arranges the abandoned storefront so that it would look as if she were never there. She did this with the hope that Quentin would understand that this was the end of the search: “I want[ed] to clean the place up for you. I mean, the thing is, I didn’t want you to worry” (Green 293). Margo cleans up her clues so that Quentin will see that it is the ending of her designated clues. However, Quentin fails to realize this and invades Margo’s life. He continues to look for Margo and, in doing so, completely goes against her wishes to be found. When he finds Margo, and she is surprised, Quentin mentions that he thought Margo wanted to be found and she replies: “I sure as shit did not” (Green 285). Margo gets upset at Quentin’s unrelenting pursuit of her and yells at him, “ You came here because you wanted to save poor little Margo from her troubled little self, so that I would be oh-so-thankful to my knight in shining armor” (Green 284). Margo calls Quentin out for invasively searching out a singular version of her that only exists for Quentin’s sake. Margo is finally able to express her agency and explain that she ran away for her own sake. Quentin not only continued a search that she did not want him to, but also her own true self does not fit into this plan. She is also able to express how Quentin only thinks of her and their relationship in gendered terms. She accuses him of wanting to be her “knight in shining armor.” This implies gender stereotypes where Quentin, as the male, has all of the agency in the story to act as Margo’s hero. While he is acting as a hero, he expects Margo to do nothing but to wait for him to find her.

The contradicting sides of Margo that Quentin sees leads him to a place where he can no longer blindly seek her out as he has been doing. Quentin has to come to terms with the fact that Margo “was—at least part of the time—very unMargo” (Green 169). Although Quentin is not fully able to dismiss his ideas of who Margo is, he is able to see that “at least part of the time” she could be someone else outside of his own views of her. While Quentin has been spending his time seeking out a nonexistent person, he realizes that there might be other sides

and aspects to Margo that he is not fully aware of. It is through this that Quentin realizes that he has not been allowing the complete Margo to be herself. After discovering the abandoned store, Quentin is forced to realize that his perception of Margo might not be complete. He mentions that “Margo was not a miracle. She was not an adventure. She was not a fine and precious thing. She was a girl” (Green 199). Quentin realizes that Margo cannot be defined as a single trait, such as “a miracle” or “an adventure,” like Quentin has been defining her. These descriptions force Margo to be subject to single-sided definitions that cannot be accomplished. Through coming to this realization, Quentin begins to show signs of being able to view her in more accurate ways. However, while he shows signs of change, he is not able to completely commit to it and struggles with trying to move past his male entitlement.

While other people are the ones actively describing Margo, Margo also plays a role in constructing her own false identity. Since Margo is the object of everyone’s definitions, she begins to perpetuate these ideas. These ideas take a toll on Margo and stop her from being able to pursue who she truly is. Before Margo runs away, Quentin gets nervous because Margo mentions that her “last string broke” (Green 71). This image of strings breaking is permanent. Broken strings are more often replaced than fixed and since Margo mentions that her “last string broke,” then Margo might also be irreconcilably broken. Through people, particularly Quentin, making Margo out to be something more than human, Margo is unable to truly live up to any of these standards. While these ideas do not seem to directly affect those who are saying them, Margo has to deal with the fact that she “could never be the idea to [her]self”, not all the way” (Green 294). The traits that are attributed to Margo are not humanly achievable. Quentin is not the only one placing his own expectation on Margo. Her classmates and part of her family as well make her out to be an “idea” that she may be able to mimic to an extent, but that she can never truly encompass. Once Quentin finds Margo, she mentions the emptiness that she feels. She mentions that the descriptions that are put upon her leave her to feel as if she is “made of paper” (Green 293). Because she is trying to imitate ideas, rather than be a person, Margo becomes flimsy and thin, like paper. While she may be able to portray certain ideas to others, she is never truly able to be her own person.

Through Margo’s constant attempts to mimic other people’s ideas of who she is, she is unable to construct her own identity. In their article “Experiencing and Coping with Sexually Objectifying Treatment: Internalization and Resilience,” Dawn Szymanski and Chandra Feltman explore women’s responses to being seen

as objects to be looked upon. They mention that one way that women deal with “sexist oppression [is] via internalization” (Szymanski and Feltman 160). The ideas that are placed upon women are often not pushed aside but are internalized. The expectations that are upon Margo are too much for her to emulate but she is also unable to ignore them. They are a part of her and, because she cannot live up to the unrealistic expectations, she is left to feel an emptiness and as if she is “made of paper.” All of the people in Margo’s life expect her to be and act a certain way that she cannot. Because the people around her do not allow her to be herself, Margo not only lacks good relationships with these people but also lacks a way of finding out who she wants to be. Caroline McKinney writes in her article “Finding the Words that Fit: the Second Story for Females in Young Adult Literature,” that “how girls perceive themselves in relationship to others determines to a great extent how successfully they are able to grow and achieve identity” (1). The descriptions that are put on Margo only divide her. Because other people give unrealistic descriptions to Margo, she cannot move past them to find her own self. These views put upon her are both destructive to her in her inability to become them and her inability to ignore them. Under these definitions, Margo is unable to grow as her own person.

While Quentin is searching for Margo, she runs to create a better life for herself. Her running away has nothing to do with anyone but herself and is just a source for her to be able to regain power in her life. When Quentin does end up finding her, Margo mentions that before she ran away she “looked down and thought about how I was made of paper. I was the flimsy-foldable person, not everyone else. And here’s the thing about it. People love the idea of a paper girl. They always have. And the worst thing is that I loved it, too. I cultivated it, you know?” (Green 293). The perceptions that other people have on Margo began to mix with her own perception of herself. She is a “flimsy-foldable person” that conforms to everyone’s expectations of her that are also tied to her own perceptions of herself. Everyone in her life, including herself, “cultivated” the stories of herself. Margo’s perception of herself is so tied to how others are viewing and perceiving her that she cannot find a true identity. Her entire life is tied to the male gaze that is present in her life. It creates expectations on her life that she cannot fulfill and her only solution to this problem is to run away from it.

Margo has so internalized the male gaze that she cannot exist in her own world anymore. In Nira Yuval-Davis and Marcel Stoetzler’s article “Imagined Boundaries and Borders: a Gendered Gaze,” they mention ways in which women aim to escape the gaze of the other. They say that women “are inspired to cross bor-

ders and boundaries, both individually and collectively, and reinvent their lives” (Yural-Davis and Stoetzler 340). Within the “borders and boundaries” of her life, Margo is stuck as a “paper girl.” She cannot live a life of substance because she is stuck in a place that is constantly taking control of her identity. This leads her to run away, because Margo can break her own individual expectations of herself that are tied to the society’s perceptions and expectations of her life. Margo runs away not just to escape the gaze of the people around her but to escape her own gaze that she has put on herself in relation to the society around her.

Once Quentin finds Margo and talk things through with her, he is finally able to accept that Margo is her own person and exists independent from him. After Quentin finds Margo and the two get into an argument about Quentin’s perceptions of Margo, they part ways. While there is an acknowledgement of friendship between them, there is also the acknowledgement that they are two different people on different paths. Quentin may still be in love with her but he is able to let her go in order to be her own person. Quentin mentions that “not following her is the hardest thing [he’s] ever done” (Green 304). Quentin is no longer tied to his perceptions of Margo. He is willing to let her go and acknowledge that she is her own person on her own path. At the same time, Margo is finally able to escape the male gaze. With Quentin no longer obsessively viewing and pursuing her, she can leave her old life behind and begin to construct her own identity.

The effect of the male gaze is present in both the lives of Margo and Quentin. Although Quentin maintains the power within their relationship, the power does not work towards his benefit. He may play the role of the powerful male within the context of his relationship with Margo, but this dynamic leaves him as drained as Margo. While Margo’s identity is tied to other people’s perspectives of her, Quentin’s identity is tied to his idea of Margo and this relates to the male gaze because they are both “made of paper” and cannot begin to construct identities for themselves until they become independent of other people. The process of finding identity has to be accomplished by the individual outside of the terms of the spectator and the spectacle.

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# SARAH GOUGH-PIAZZA

Sarah Gough-Piazza is a senior studying Comparative Literature with a concentration in German and a minor in Creative Writing. Film is something that has always interested her. She spends her free time writing film reviews and her own screenplay. She figured it would only be appropriate to write her project about a director that has inspired her own work: Tim Burton.

Mentor: **Jason Lester**

## “IT’S SHOWTIME!”: THE BLENDING OF REALITY AND FANTASY IN TIM BURTON’S *BETLEJUICE*

**THRESHOLDS EXIST AS BOTH A PHYSICAL** and metaphysical barrier between two adjacent spaces. They exist as both an entrance between these two spaces and commonly take the shape of a door or a doorway, thus creating a blockade between the two spaces. What happens then when the threshold remains, but the walls deteriorate around it? When there no longer exists a reason for the threshold to exist, there begins the blending of the two spaces previously separated, creating one centralized location. In Tim Burton’s 1988 film *Beetlejuice*, the use of physical doorways act as a catalyst for the changes in the protagonist’s character, another threshold. As the film progresses, these barriers become less defined. This blending of realities and the disintegration of the physical portal ultimately allows the characters to adapt to the change of characterization, as well as progresses the storyline to make the audience question what is real and what is fantasy.

In *Beetlejuice*, the country home of Barbara and Adam sits on a hill overlooking a small town in which every person knows each other. Covered in beige floral patterns and lace, Barbara and Adam exist entirely in the suburban “American-Dream”-esque reality in which they have created for themselves. This place is the normality that Barbara and Adam choose to live in, and thus it creates a reality for the audience. It is only when Barbara and Adam die in an unexpected car crash, and their house is taken over by new owners that there ceases to be a normality in setting for the couple as well as the audience, creating a chaotic sense of location and surroundings throughout the film.

The newly deceased couple discovers that their once beloved home has been sold to a new family, run by a modernist “artist” stepmother whose main intention is to redecorate. Using their newly acquired situation of death, Barbara and Adam seek help from the underworld to rid their home of this new family, doing this by physically drawing a door on the wall of their attic in order to transport them into the afterlife. In the process of drawing a door, they allow a physical threshold to exist between the two worlds. The act of Adam drawing a door using chalk is simple enough. However, as the door is completed and knocked on three times, everything about the scene changes. Instantly, the setting of the couple’s attic becomes completely foreign to both the audience as well as the characters: the lighting becomes low key, focusing on the ominous green hue coming from the now open portal. It is when Barbara and Adam choose to step through the doorway, allowing it to close behind them, that their setting completely changes.

The act of stepping through the doorway is a way in which these characters sign away their comfortable reality and delusions of life. By having the door close behind them, the finality of their known world manifests. No longer is there the comfort of their suburban household, but now they are subject to an office-like “waiting room” space before they are granted permission to enter the underworld. This ultimately means that there is a constant switch in setting, between the reality the protagonists Barbara and Adam live in and the fantastical reality of the underworld. The use of physical doorways providing another sense of a threshold also play a major role in the ways in which characters can move through these dimensions. Throughout the film, the switch between “reality” and “fantasy” becomes blurred, allowing the film to digress into a sub-reality in which aspects from both worlds are present.

This then presents the question as to what is reality and what is fantasy in terms of both this specific text along with the common attributes that surround these abstract terms. In short, it can be said that the “fantastic, we have seen, lasts only as long as a certain hesitation: a hesitation common to reader and character, who must decide whether or not what they perceive derives from ‘reality’ as it exists in the common opinion” (Todorov 41). However, this simple understanding begs the question of whose perspective of reality we are identifying with in the common opinion, as well as the lack of any sort of introduction to the possibility of the collaboration of the two worlds. Tim Burton chooses to blend the realities of two humanoid groups, the dead and the living, in order to provide a more concrete recognition of the realities that this blending would lead to.

This waiting room marks a transition for Barbara and Adam, from the floral patterns and hand crocheted lace safety of Barbara and Adam's home to a setting emblematic to a doctor's waiting room. Common monotone fabrics line the light wooden chairs, and a feeling of sterilization is prominent. However, the inhabitants of this room represent something that would be considered "monstrous" to people who live in the world of the living, much like Barbara and Adam. Even though all of the people in the room, including Barbara and Adam, are deceased, there is a clear differentiation between this couple who still look human and the rest of the occupants in this small room. who are all representative of the manner in which they died, from the scorched man who has died in a house fire and he quietly asks Adam, "Cigarette?" to the man with a shrunken head on a normal sized body.

Upon first look, Barbara and Adam react to these creatures as if they were monstrous beings. However, is it fair to call these creatures "monstrous" seeing as they all are representative of humanoid physical properties? In "England's Legal Monsters," Andrew N. Sharpe states that the distinction between deformity and monstrosity "represents an attempt to distinguish the human from the non-human"; he continues, "deformity marks the limit of human being. It charts degrees of imperfection beyond which lies the absolutely other" (7). Therefore, the characters presented in this scene are not monsters, but rather an alternative representation of human form. Using Sharpe's theory of the monster, it then becomes clear that there are no real monsters within this film, supported by the fact that the token villainous character of Beetlejuice still looks human. As such, there is no real reason to create two separate worlds—, one normal and one fantastical, due to the simple fact that there are no differences here, using Sharpe's differentiation, between monstrosity and normality.

Sharpe quotes Foucault, saying that the monster represents "the transgression of natural limits" (7). While these characters seem to physically appear to be outside natural human characteristics, this is due to the fact that they have only experienced a thing that every person will: death. Thus their "abnormal" appearance. This then brings into question whether or not Barbara and Adam's characters then belong to this concept of "normality," or whether the waiting room functions as the first moment when the barrier between the two worlds is not only physically breached through the passage through the doorway, but also the beginning of the blending of realities that provides a major transition for the characters and the film itself.



After Barbara and Adam have cautiously avoided the people in the waiting room, they are allowed through a doorway into what could be perceived as the underworld. This “underworld” of misshapen doorways and uneven black-and-white tiled corridors serves as a complete opposite of Adam and Barbara’s existence and exhibits similar visual characteristics of early German-Expressionistic films like Robert Wiene’s *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920). In terms of the aesthetic of the film, “In addition to canted, anti-naturalist sets and art design, the film is tinted in sequences to convey atmospheric conditions such as day and night” (Jenkins 177). These films used their own sort of visual vocabulary in order to create a “reestablishing of order out of chaos” (Roberts 29). In many of these films, the backgrounds are distorted in geometric forms, and the use of black and white represents binaries such as day and night, life and death, light and shadow, good and evil. The underworld scene within *Beetlejuice*, influenced by this film movement, is interesting in the fact as these German films are foregrounded in expressionist aesthetic, meaning that they were created as an impulse away from naturalization and towards chaos.

By having Burton include visual characteristics of German Expressionism in his mise-en-scene, he unexpectedly creates a synthesis between order and chaos. There is a blending of chaos and normality, as the characters are thrown into these new supernatural surroundings which are different from those they have previously become accustomed to in the living world. Once again crossing the physical threshold of a doorway, Barbara and Adam are taken to a room they assume is also a part of the oddity of the place they had just experienced. However, after taking in their surroundings, they realize that they are back in the very house they once called home, now resembling a renovated modernist disaster. Where ceramic figurines and lace-covered surfaces existed now resemble the geometric oddities from the underworld, and dark lighting and abstract artwork cover the once wall-papered walls.

In this scene, there is a misunderstanding over the circumstances in which both Adam and Barbara live. There is no longer the kind of “normality” that has become comfortable to Adam and Barbara and also the audience, as Todorov noted, and now there is an inescapable quality to the way in which the film continues. The underworld and its inhabitants become more prominent within the film from this moment on. No longer are the two worlds of the film black and white, good and bad, normal and different. Rather, by having Barbara and Adam go through the portal, there becomes a certain “grey” aspect, a blending of the two worlds—

much like German Expressionism's need to combine supernatural elements with mundane society. It is a way to uproot all sorts of "normality" from the film.

For Barbara and Adam, the sense of normality becomes relevant in terms of their place of living and their overall lifestyle. In terms of the film, this switch from Barbara and Adams' lifestyle to one that represents the place they are thrown into is marked by their obvious discomfort in the blending between their reality and this new fantastic world. One of the most famous scenes from *Beetlejuice*, where the two worlds coexist within one another, is what is referred to as "the dinner scene." In *Rabelais and His World*, Mikhail Bahktin states that "feasts were linked to moments of crisis, of breaking points in the cycle of nature or in the life of society and man" (9). In *Beetlejuice*, this break is one of normality that all the characters are still clinging onto. Seated around a long table that fits into the newly modernized living corridors, the new owners of the house, along with business partners, are having a meal. All wearing rich dark toned clothing and presenting no actual features of warmth and gratitude, the people in the dinner scene provide a look into the interaction with the house from people outside of the overall storyline.

Due to the supernatural forces within the house, including Barbara and Adam, the occupants of the table are forced to dance and lip-sing to Harry Belafonte's "Day-O (The Banana Boat Song)." Although this scene is completely comical and provides a silliness to the film, there is also the theme of complete, uncontrolled chaos. None of the characters within this scene are willing participants to this sort of supernatural influence, and therefore it marks the beginning of the blending of realities for the new occupants and their guests, both of whom are alive. As such, they do not consent to this violation. Like Bahktin states, it is these moments which is a breaking point in the cycle of man. This is the moment of no return, the scene in which there is no longer the distinction between the two worlds nor the protection of the "normality" that the people who are alive have been reliant on. This is the ultimate breaking of boundaries, the ultimate "grey" blending of these two worlds.

When Barbara and Adam try to leave their house there is another occurrence of the use of portals. Instantly, they go from their front door to an alternate world covered in sand and crawling with "sandworms". All that remains in this desolate sand scape is a white door that will lead them back to the house, the place they have become trapped in after their death. Once again, the use of a doorway becomes the threshold that Barbara and Adam must cross through to get from their reality to the fantasy shown throughout this film, and back again. However, at the

end of the film, Barbara chooses to disintegrate these barriers when she is banished to this gritty, monster-infested sand-worm world by Beetlejuice. Trapped in this world of sandy hills and sand worms lurking under her feet, Barbara then changes the overall tone of the film as well as the differentiation between man and monster. Barbara serves as the manifestation for the blending of these two worlds. Although the audience is not given a scene where this interaction happens, Barbara is later seen riding the sandworm through the portal, allowing it to eat the villainous Beetlejuice, and save the day. This is an example of the personal threshold that all characters go through within the film *Beetlejuice*. Barbara accepts the change from her comfortable, newly-deceased world for a weird and abstract new reality in order to save the people who have done nothing but change her comfortable life. When she rides the sandworm through the portal, she not only abandons her old self’s opinions and beliefs about life, but she also becomes a part of the world that she has been fighting against for the entire film. She crosses a personal threshold of abandoning her traditions while also doing the seemingly daring task of physically riding a sandworm through a doorway, something that before then the reserved character of Barbara would not have dreamt of doing.

This is a moment where the protagonist chooses to break down the threshold that previously astounded her character. Barbara’s “comfortable” world that she experiences at the beginning of the film is sacrificed in order to save the blended world that she now inhabits with the rest of the houses’ inhabitants. By having her be the reasoning behind the breakdown of the threshold that has commonly separated the realities within the film, not only does the physical threshold cease to exist, but a personal threshold within the character of Barbara is crossed. She acknowledges the existence of these two alternate realities and chooses to purposefully blend them. This is the first time where the worlds are physically combined, through the catalyst of the sandworm. This crossing of a threshold provides a sort of reasoning for the unfolding of the rest of the film. Throughout, there is constant physical and mental passageways that the character’s experience.

Therefore, within the film of *Beetlejuice*, the use of physical doorways to simulate the separation between the “reality” as well as the “fantasy” of the film becomes prominent. It is a physical barrier that provides an entrance to both worlds, available to the characters. However, as the film progresses, the concrete separation of these worlds becomes less set in stone and begins to blur, ultimately offering a new reality that becomes the overall setting for the film, a place for all characters to coexist with each other. This new world that allows all the characters to exist

amongst each other then becomes the new reality, ultimately showing that there are grey zones within worlds that are, in the beginning, shown as black and white, good and evil, normal and weird.

Physical thresholds play a very important role within the film of *Beetlejuice* as they provide a solid object that represents the separation of the worlds that are shown. Having a doorway be the ultimate entrance to the underworld for Adam and Barbara, a doorway to lead them back to their reality that has been altered to look like the place they had just escaped, as well as the doorway that leads them back into the sanctuary of their home, away from a desert abyss, creates a reliance on these physical frames. Alongside the physical thresholds, there is also offered mental changes in many of the characters, but most importantly in Barbara and her adapting to her new life amongst the living. Threshold plays a major role in character development as well as the creation of the world in which the world of *Beetlejuice* exists. Ultimately, Tim Burton's *Beetlejuice* brings into light what it means to be "normal" and "abnormal", as well as the steps one must take when faced with the possibilities of an intruding possibility of fusion between these two opposite ideals: the ultimate "grey" space.

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# KATIE GUISLER

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## DISSIPATION OF FORM: THRESHOLD OF THE SELF AND THE DOUBLE WORK OF CULTURE IN *PAPRIKA* AND *WOMAN BETWEEN MIRRORS*

**SATOSHI KON'S FILM *PAPRIKA*** and Helena Parente Cunha's *Woman Between Mirrors* are works that exemplify a threshold that unites conflicting discourses to achieve the same thematic effect; while *Paprika* supports a structuralist approach to a singular Truth, and *Woman Between Mirrors* is a post-modern novel of the female experience, both pieces argue for very similar concepts: a journey for the Self, the terms of one's own existence, feminine identity in the midst of misogyny, the blurred lines of reality/authorship, the restoration of balance, creating/writing the Self, questioning roles in society, and both literal and metaphorical reflection. These thematic similarities will prove that a threshold is a place where discourse does not exclusively apply, reverses occur, lines are blurred, and the perpetuation of form, theory, and concept cannot exist in a rigid structural way. The threshold between structuralism and post-structuralism in which *Paprika* and *Woman Between Mirrors* lie simultaneously supports and destroys these literary forms, proving the fluidity and power that the borderlands of language can invoke.

The late Japanese director Satoshi Kon left behind a mastery of reverie known as *Paprika*, a 2006 animated adaptation of the original 1993 novel of the same title. The original novel is rich with character detail, but lacks the visual splendor that makes the film version a favorite of the Japanese anime community. Kon's *Paprika*

takes place in a modern Japan, in which a genius, fat with knowledge and enthusiasm, has invented a device that allows for two people to share the same dream simultaneously. This device, the DC mini, is incomplete, but is stolen first by the inventor's assistant, and then—unbeknownst to the development team—the project's Chairman. The Chairman uses the device for his own god-like intentions of purging the world in a Nazi-inspired genocide to guard the sanctity of nature and dreams from technology and its terroristic consumers. He does not succeed due to the combined efforts of the scientific team and a cop/dream therapy client, Konakawa. They are successful in restoring equilibrium to the dichotomies of the world: woman to man, light to dark, naïveté to prodigy, nature to technology, dreams to reality. This acquisition of truth, the restoration of earthly harmony and libidinal drive, centers the narrative of the film; the balanced diffusion of power lulls the crescendo of disorder as cool water soothes a burn, and the structure of culture is again in its place.

Helena Parente Cunha published her postmodern novel *Woman Between Mirrors* in 1983. I selected this text alongside the film *Paprika* because they possess textual similarities of theme, but each work grapples with these themes through diametrically opposing lenses. *Paprika* seeks a structuralist Truth; Cunha seeks the Self, and both seek balance through the threshold of reality and authorship, struggle with identity, and exemplify the double nature of culture and language. *Woman Between Mirrors*, with an introduction by Fred P. Ellison and Naomi Lindstrom, is a novel from a woman's perspectives. The heroine, as Ellison and Lindstrom dub the nameless narrator, is a woman aged forty-five who comes to the realization that she does not enjoy her life. Having made similar life decisions as her own mother, whom she admits a certain amount of disdain for, with hateful sons and a neglectful husband, this woman looks into a mirror with another mirror behind it, causing an infinite amount of reflections of herself. The novel begins with her literally reflecting on her life experiences, and with that reflection her conscience splits. Ellison and Lindstrom word this acquisition well: "...she acquires a verbal alter ego for her interlocutor, counterfigure, and rival in a competition of claimed authorship." The heroine is eager to transcribe her experience in hopes of gleaning an understanding of herself, and this act of transcription produces the double of "the woman who writes" and "the woman who is written." The novel continues on with this double conscious, and various intersectionalities occur that haze the distinction between the two (if there ever was a distinction), and the heroine discovers the Self in a tug-of-war of identity, authorship, truthfulness, and experience.

*Paprika* is a film that bleeds art. The colors and actions of the characters are

undeniably stimulating. It lends itself to the interpretation of the viewer, as most films do, but along with this, the prominence of magical realism and the double work of conscience furthers blurs one's reality and hands power to the viewer in a Barthes-esque fashion. This is a contextual similarity to *Woman Between Mirrors*; reality is something that is possibly deniable to the viewer or reader. The reader of *Woman Between Mirrors* is unsure whether the "real" woman is the one who is written, or the one who writes, because both claim authorship:

What is the distance between the face in the mirror and the mirror in front of the face where the boundaries blur? The real is the unreal, now and there. Why not? The dates come together with my images and I say I. But when I say I, I'm not the woman who is writing this very page. When I say I, I'm merely imagining myself. She is the one who is writing. And my face in the mirror? Who is it? Who is the woman who writes me? I know, because I made her up. Meanwhile, she doesn't know me. She thinks that she has me in her hands to write as she wishes. Someone she knows all about. She will write me just as much as I let her. Me, a character built right into her life. The woman who writes me feels lost, she can't figure out where I go, I am an irresistible presence that keeps getting away from her, slipping away, nimble, confusing and dominating. (Cunha 1–2)

Notice the words "boundaries blur." This is a threshold no doubt, but also a particular kind of threshold that muddles reality in itself. One conscious is the I and the other is the She. In this way a double conscience is created, similar to Chiba/Paprika.

*Paprika* is a film of doubles. It is emancipation from one's reality, through this is also dangerous and constricted, harmful and abject. Cunha's heroine does not get the same emancipation; she feels trapped. The Heroine parallels Chiba, and the written self parallels *Paprika*, and interestingly enough both sets of characters combine and invert at the end of their experiences. The written woman becomes the writer and then they fuse, and Chiba becomes the dream-like savior as opposed to her alter ego, which she is finally at peace with by the end (they acknowledge their oneness). *Paprika* is also "nimble, confusing, and dominating," and she slips away just as Cunha's double conscience. Cunha's double also has a consistent dialogue; the woman who writes and the woman who is written communicate with each other, often in an argumentative fashion, one trying to claim the other. Chiba and



Paprika dialogue less often, but towards the end, when the dream world and the real one have fused, they share a revelation:

Chiba: Don't get ahead of yourself Paprika.

Paprika: Don't think you're always right.

Chiba: Why don't you listen? You're a part of me!

Paprika: Have you ever thought that maybe you are a part of me?

Chiba: Do as I say!

Paprika: To think that you can control yourself and others, you're just like an old bald man I know.

They stare at each other intensely for a few seconds, and Paprika orders Chiba to hurry and move on, but Chiba refuses and they separate. Cunha authors the split by spacing and italicizing remarks from the woman who writes into snide, tonally differential remarks that contradict what the woman who is written says. Dreams bleed into the world of the awake in *Paprika*, and the awake are then forced to be the dreaming; in this way it finds itself playing with the viewer as Paprika herself plays with her clients' subconscious. She flirts with the idea of reality, reality being simply an idea to her. The viewer is engrossed in this world, hypnotized by its trance and then simultaneously alienated from its vivaciousness because of the unhomely connotations of its wonder.

This double work of culture is uncanny. We are presented with familiarity pockmarked by strangeness. Take, for instance, the scene in which the Chairman's assistant, Osanai, has Paprika pinned down to a table as if she were a butterfly, surrounded by a room of similarly pinned framed butterflies on the walls. He whispers to her and slides his hand sensuously down her chest until his hand is right atop where her uterus/genitalia are located. He then pushes his open palm down into her flesh, and her flesh gives way as if it were made of gelatin receiving palm into her. Her skin then gives way to his hand, which runs itself up and through her fleshly caul until it rips "Paprika" in half, revealing the naked Chiba inside the cocoon of the Paprika-skinned membrane. Much like *Woman Between Mirrors*, this represents the layers of identity that these women experience. How can one find oneself through the layers of their own flesh? It becomes a metaphysical journey into the mind, and this is the facet of identity that Cunha plays with, as opposed to the literal structuralist approach that Kon takes.

Cunha's heroine experiences a parabola of identity in which the woman who writes and the woman who is written begin with distinct facets of personality. The woman who writes, in the beginning, is the italicized text that makes snide remarks

and argues with the written woman. The written woman is docile and smitten by her husband. Their arguments are framed thusly:

My husband thinks I should live exclusively, totally, give my all for him. This makes me very happy. In my children's opinion, every mother is duty bound to devote herself absolutely to those she has brought into the world. This is the guiding principle of my life.

*You can't keep on clinging to this absurd idea. One must be conscious of one's own rights...A woman must react, not let herself be led by the whims and excessive demands of the family. You can't go on living like that.* That's the only way I can live. (Cunha 8)

To say that their relationship is complicated is true and understated. They are “two sides of the same coin,” yet the woman who is written is written by the woman who writes. This makes sense, but the utterly opposing double-consciousness molds a very complex structure. The Heroine seems to record her daily failures at the typewriter, thus recording her own thoughts. Her conscious intervenes (being the “woman who writes”) on the thoughts of the written woman, who is seemingly in denial. The denial is also demonstrated by *Paprika's* Chiba (the “real” one), who acknowledges *Paprika*—is *Paprika*—but dubs her the inferior Self, the wrong Self (if even a Self at all, since *Paprika* has a distinct personality but is often a smothered flame, yet one that cannot be extinguished). *Paprika* is Chiba's abjection, and therefore is a part of her. The same concept applies to the written/writing woman. Both of these pairs of fictional heroines develop, separate, crash together, and invert. As the grasp gets firmer, weaker grows the split.

The dream/reality dichotomy begins to affect the “real world” when Dr. Atsuko (Chiba) begins to use this device for psychotherapy using her alter-ego in the dream-reality (*Paprika*). The negative repercussions surface at about ten minutes into the film in which Dr. Shima is having a normal conversation with the chairmen, and then begins saying things that do not make any sense. This early in the film, the viewer is unaware of the dream/reality merging consequences of the DC mini, so the confusion at this point is at an all-time high. Dr. Shima spouts about two minutes of utter nonsense and then runs through the building, down the hall, and promptly jumps out of a window, nearly killing himself. This scene is instantly cut to a parade of appliances, dolls, religious figures, architecture, the Statue of Liberty, frogs, dinosaurs, robots, and other objects that are animated in an enormous, flamboyant, and nonsensical parade with Dr. Shima in the middle of a shrine of dolls, waving like Miss Universe at the center. This is at about minute 14. This

scene is important to highlight because it frames the narrative. It emphasizes how the viewer will not have an average linear experience with this film, and offers many questions to be answered as well as delivers a point at which to drive the plot (DC mini—experimental psychological device—has been stolen and misused). It is important to note that the inventor of the genius device (Dr. Tokita) mentions that nobody has misused the device, right before Dr. Shima loses touch with reality. The real uncanniness of the brief chat between the three doctors and the chairman in the beginning is that this is the point where the explanation and normality would typically enter a film, but instead, *Paprika* does not offer this “mental rest” to the viewer but instead makes the viewer uncomfortable by incorporating a speech in the film’s real world that has no linear or sensible direction. It is at the borderline of normality and abnormality, animation without life; technically it is just a man in a room discussing issues with his colleagues, but the words from his mouth cause confusion and discomfort, just as a bad dream can accomplish. Then, with a jovial attitude, he throws himself out of a window as if to commit suicide. This is predominantly unnerving because in what most would concur to be a normative society, suicide is not committed by content individuals.

In *Paprika*, there is a scene in which the elevator takes Konakawa, the cop and client to Chiba/Paprika, to a floor he does not want to visit or have Paprika witness. The 17th floor is the “special section” and Konakawa is forced to see it when each floor number transforms into that floor. It depicts the homicide victim falling in slow motion while the murderer flees through a door up ahead, into a light-filled doorway. It shows an extreme close-up of Konakawa’s eyes as he witnesses the murder of the victim in his case, as he has dozens of times before, as it is his recurring dream. The “real” Konakawa, at minute 40:57, is center screen in the middle of the hallway facing towards the fourth wall. He is speechless and distraught here, but looks at his gun and engages in pursuit of the murderer, but the carpet liquefies under his feet and he falls in a white space. Perspective zooms out to reveal this all happening on a cinema screen, with Paprika rising while clapping. “Encore,” she says in English. The “encore” happens differently than the original scene: on the screen, Konakawa ceases falling and ends up in the same hallway, gun in hand. He runs down a solid-carpeted hallway to the door in which the murderer fled, but turns around to see the victim falling in slow motion behind him as before, with smoke coming from his gun. This is a representation of Konakawa believing himself to be a failure. Interestingly, the victim is shown after this moment, but frontwards so the viewer sees his face. Konakawa sees his own face in place of the victim, as

if he had actually shot himself. Killing one's double is a common element of many forms of media and literature, and is often a symbolic representation of the fear of death as the original creates a double to experience death so that the main ego does not have to, and the lesser is dead and thus the original is then whole again.

This concept of the double and the mirror-self is prominent in this work and especially in *Woman Between Mirrors*. Konakawa symbolically kills himself to reveal that he, himself, was his own problem, the blame for which pushed upon others. He destroyed his abjection, which was inevitably a part of his own psyche. The woman who is written seems to infiltrate the writing woman, slowly, slowly, until they finally converge. First they reverse themselves; the woman who writes is the diminished one, she hardly interjects in the second half of the book and when she does, she sounds more and more like the woman who is written. The denial shifts to the writer instead of the written:

I woke up with my head splitting, hot and feverish. The woman who writes me has let herself fall into such a depression she's lost her outlook on me. She's too numb and weak even to work up contempt and hatred. Burnt out. She sits at her typewriter out of sheer compulsion, her hands heavy, dragged down by my presence. My presence makes her squirm, she wants to escape but it's too late. I've sunk in under her skin. She started out across the abyss and got to where she'd be crazy to go forward and she'd fall if she turned back. I'm the abyss. (Cunha 23)

The word "splitting" is quite significant. The woman's head is splitting. Her head being her mind, being her psyche. It is at this point in the novel that the personalities begin to split, because they must separate and be alienated before they can become close. Distance offers them room to develop separately. The Heroine takes breaks of several months long to "live" the woman she is writing; to act out the consciousness that she has denied. Chiba acts out her repressed conscious through Paprika, about who she is adamant is a separate entity. The written woman also claims to own or to have invented the writing one, but the ladies doth protest too much, methinks. They are one and the same.

In another scene, the investigative team of Dr. Atsuko, Tokita, and Yamadera breaks into Himuro's apartment. Atsuko enters his room. She views a framed photograph of Himuro's face installed onto a traditional Japanese doll's head. This doll is highlighted throughout the film, adding to the uncanny with its unmoving but animate face. The doll appears in a closet, and Atsuko – finding this closet, begins

to open it. Her dream-self (Paprika) warns her of the danger of investigating, but Atsuko tells her “This is not your cue,” indicating that she dubiously controls when Paprika is in use versus dormant within herself; comparable to Cunha’s Heroine in which the writing woman consistently interjects, and is then refuted. She discovers a ladder down to a hidden compartment of the abode, and is led towards a bright doorway by a blue butterfly. Butterflies are heavily symbolic creatures, and the blue butterfly often acts as a symbol of change, life, love, joy, and lightness, but can also indicate elevation from earthly matters into emotional or spiritual occurrences, or the world of the soul or psyche. Initially it seems as a bringer of joy, as Atsuko discovers an amusement park at the end of the hallway. It becomes eerie quickly though, as no people inhabit the park, and its origins are questionable (is it reality or fiction?). Upon entering the park, Atsuko sees a train pass with the same red-dressed doll as before, with the blue butterfly on its hair. The semiotic implication shifts to change and acts as a bringer of ill-omen and the spiritual/psychic world. As she attempts to reach the doll by vaulting a railing, the railing melts and reveals the park to be an illusion. She almost jumped off of Himuro’s balcony instead, and was saved at the last second by Yamadera. This offers some explanation to what happened to Dr. Shima and why he jumped out of the window. The dreamscape transcends that even of a dream, however, because it attempts to deliver a message as if it is a living body that gets to interact with the world like one of flesh. The message and leads are delivered by an omniscient force that lives only through illusion and falsehood. The blue butterfly could then, had Atsuko paid attention, saved her from nearly dying as it led her to death, and acted as a sign of the falseness of the world she was exploring. Certain illusions, such as the red-dressed doll, are recurring symbols that represent the dream, and could almost function as a reminder of this dream state if the boundary of conscious/unconscious were not to become dangerously unclear.

At about forty minutes in, Chiba turns again into Paprika to enter Konakawa’s mind. The circus scene from the beginning is repeated, but certain differences are present. The clown is a male, and speaks of traitors. Images of Konakawa going pursue him while he is in a cage, commanded by an image of himself. This is yet another repetition of the double at work. The detective’s love for cinema is evident in his dream; each “section” of his dream is a different genre. The presence of a film within a film also heightens the depth in the way that the repeated images draw back to cinema itself, but the dream is being watched like a cinema in real-time. This film within a film is a disorienting effect. This connection in itself is uncanny

because it removes the viewer's pleasant distance from the film and draws them towards what is happening on the screen when the viewer might rather be alienated and distanced from the disturbances. The film mimics life inside itself, and since the audience perceives it on a screen, it becomes a screen with several other layers of screens and realities to dig through. Cunha's women are represented similarly in the way that the reader is forced into a complicated relationship that one woman has with herself. The post-modernity within her text contrasts that of *Paprika's* straightforward solution and idealistic ending, but she still incorporates a great deal of uncanny imagery, especially in repeated motifs such as the gnawing rats, the nausea, the mirrors, and eyes. All of *Woman Between Mirrors'* motifs relate to the feminine power struggle in a patriarchal lifestyle of the woman in her setting, and her reactions to said power structure. This is another overarching metaphorical theme that these texts share, and in the threshold of their similarities is interpreted and represented contrarily.

Kon's *Paprika* is a film that attempts feminism and falls short, while Cunha's novel is one that attempts and succeeds. Cunha authors the feminine experience from the outside in, then out, and in again. Readers get to experience the heroine's soul, but most importantly the struggles she goes through with self-realization. It is a coming-of-age novel that takes place when the woman's life is half over, and she has perceptively failed as a wife and mother, and is ultimately miserable and in denial of such, justifying her abuses while her consciousness vehemently argues for the saving of their Self, which is divided. Both *Paprika/Chiba* and the written/writing woman do merge at the end of their narratives, but *Paprika/Chiba* achieve harmony whereas the heroine unites in her guilt. Kon delivers fantasy and a mirage of a Truth, while Cunha delivers truth as a pure essence, weighted down by the humanity of her consciousness. While *Paprika/Chiba* is the heroine of their/her film, they are debased as an authority and pegged as a "distressed damsel" at many points in the film, and the source of redemption is one of the final scenes: Chiba has been reborn as a Child of Light, and must absorb the Chairman. She does so by literally absorbing him, by sucking him through her mouth as if he is a noodle. When she is done with this, he diminishes and the Child has transformed into a woman. The innuendos are not subtle. Chiba is an object of sexual desire, and is only a savior with the use of her body to take in a man. Both personalities are the subjects of sexual desire, and are exploited as such. The feminism is lost because the goal of such a philosophy is to achieve balance of power with the sexes, but in *Paprika* balance is only achieved with the absence of maleness to accommodate femaleness.

In *Woman Between Mirrors*, the conflict is internal. When the woman can feel and experience herself freely (sexually and otherwise), she is whole because she claims herself. The issue in *Paprika* is that the women do not claim themselves, but rather must unite on the front where they eradicate Man/Darkness. Then, Chiba is also free to express her love for Tokita, but this is only acceptable when balance is achieved with the world. Chiba is also represented as beautiful but callous; the object of desire but for none to touch or obtain because of her prudish attitude. Her alter, Paprika, is depicted as colorful, beautiful, lively, energetic, and flirtatious (open, if you will). She is desired and she reciprocates in a flirty manner, representing Chiba's repressed sexual desires.

Cunha's woman/women are stuck in a domestic sexually repressed, abusive relationship in the beginning. This switches to a sexual awakening later on that opens up a vein of existential angst, weight of guilt, and reconsideration but also one of freedom of the body and the unification of her faceted identity: "For the first time in my life, I've come to feel freely, wholly, fully female. And eager. This sensation gives me a dizzy rush, a joy I never felt before or even suspected. I don't want to be tied to anybody. The bonds of love are just another form of captivity. All I want and hope for is to live the moment" (Cunha 87). Notice the use of the word "captivity;" when Chiba is "free" from male obligation, she immediately plunges back into the confines of a heteronormative relationship. Can she really exist without a male presence? Even the guilt of cheating on her (the Heroine's) husband and leaving him does not outweigh the fleshly libidinal freedom of escaping the bonds of her patriarchy. It is debatable that Chiba escapes from anything aside from rape and death. She is at peace with her identity, but only restores order back to a world unchanged.

The end of *Woman Between Mirrors* and *Paprika* differ greatly. They do both come to terms with the existence of their doubles, but unification functions dissimilarly. In *Paprika*, Chiba and Paprika's combination results in the balance of the world: reborn Chiba absorbs the darkness that threatens the Earth in a sort of utopian ending to the chaos. The dichotomies are balanced. Cunha's heroine comes to term with her Selves as a unification of the Self, a singular self united through guilt. Instead of balance there is weight. The last page cements the unification of the Selves: "My face in the mirror is her face. I'm her. She's me. We are one. Shoulders sagging. Eyes to the floor. The intersection of me-with-her turned into me-with-me. We are one. Me and me. Me. ME. Dead center. The mirrors give off an intolerable glare. Frozen. I see more than I see. Eye to eye. Bedrock. I write what I write.

I” (Cunha 132). Chiba is reborn through Paprika at the end of the film in which she unites with her trueness—her true feelings for Tokita—and in doing this she merges with Paprika in the dream-state.

It is remarkable that one can examine two works that differ entirely in medium and relation in most every way, and yet they share consistently overlapping qualities. The threshold sees to their relation and the author, I in this case, simply connect the dots. From observation, literature and cultural elements are all thresholds, simply waiting for their own unifications to be distinguished by the “everydayers” or the intellectual elites. The connector does not matter in the threshold of culture, however; only the connections. This liminal space crumbles the pre-fabricated dogmas of form so that these intrinsic connections can be made, and the result of this chaotic realm of the threshold is something that serves a purpose greater than the authoritarian lingo than can often constrict the way one writes or thinks (structuralism, post-modern, realism, naturalism, the fantastic, the sublime, magical realism...all categories that demand adherence that a threshold can deny). It is freedom from intellectual boundaries and yet it has its own walls and limits. Everything can be a threshold and yet nothing at the same time, and there is no use defining it. Instead, we must live it.

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## MIRRORING REALITY: THE AMBIGUITY BETWEEN HERO AND VILLAIN IN THE NETFLIX ORIGINAL MARVEL'S *DAREDEVIL*

THE EPIC BATTLE BETWEEN HEROES AND VILLAINS is prominently displayed in our entertainment culture. The traditional world of heroes and villains is black and white: the hero is always pure of heart, with the greatest intentions and support from friends and the public, while the villain is undoubtedly evil, vowing to destroy the hero and take down the city. This dynamic creates heroes and villains that are easily distinguished from one another. But society is sick of the well-intentioned underdog defeating a black-hearted villain. Instead, we crave characters that struggle with their own sense of self and morality. We indulge in plot twists, moral ambiguity, and characters who make difficult decisions that more closely mirror our grey-colored reality. The Netflix original series Marvel's *Daredevil* satisfies this craving through its antihero narrative, which showcases both Matt Murdock, the apparent hero, and Wilson Fisk, the apparent villain, at the threshold between good and evil. Moreover, the show stands out among antihero narratives by the degree to which it parallels Murdock and Fisk through the story and cinematic construction, suggesting that the classification of good and evil has more to do with perception than with morality.

Antihero narratives feature morally ambiguous main characters that struggle on the threshold of good and evil, hero and villain. These characters are often flawed and their intentions are open to discussion, causing them to divert from traditional definitions. Their moral compasses are complex, to say the least. Characters know the difference between right and wrong, yet they continually battle

between which path to follow. These complex decisions are not unfamiliar to our own reality. In fact, the most important feature of these antihero characters is that they are uniquely human. Viewers essentially look through a mirror into our own reality where characters deal with issues of morality and console their inner demons in a high stakes, but still realistic, scenario. Mary Alice Money argues in her essay “The Heroes Kaleidoscope” that a key feature in these antihero narratives is that the viewer is “eventually shocked to see [themselves] reflected in those mirrors” (151). These characters face problems and make choices that the viewer could, if under the same pressures, see himself or herself making. This antihero genre is built upon the idea that we are watching a work of fiction that could easily be found in reality. Viewers find themselves in love with these characters, even though, or perhaps because, they do not follow the same rules as typical heroes do. They feel comfortable with antiheroes because even though these characters are morally ambiguous, they are ultimately a reflection of what it means to make mistakes and be human. The online television and movies streaming site *Netflix* has recently introduced another antihero to the public with their television reincarnation of the Marvel comic *Daredevil*.

Perception is a large portion of how someone can be defined as either good or evil. The good versus evil formula places a well-intentioned hero with a great public image into the heart of a city that is desperate for protection. But, what actually makes them a hero? Is it their intentions, or the perception of their intentions? An individual can have the purest of intentions, but if their actions are perceived as harmful or evil, then can they truly be considered good? Television viewers are given a unique glimpse into the thought processes of Murdock and Fisk as they reveal their intentions and plans to confidants. With the ability to see all the angles of these characters comes an advantage: being able to overcome the moral disengagement that the antihero genre desires. In experiments conducted by Daniel Shafer and Arthur Raney for the *Journal of Communication*, it appeared that in order to enjoy antihero narratives, viewers had to morally disengage from the content (Shafer, Raney “Enjoying Antihero Narratives”). This disengagement disqualifies average viewers from placing any sort of credible judgment onto the characters since they are not consulting their moral compasses. Where the average show encourages viewers to remove themselves from their moral centers, *Daredevil* begs audiences to engage even deeper into the narrative. Viewers are greatly encouraged to reengage their moral compasses and to think critically about the moral ambiguity they witness. This narrative entices viewers to reengage their moral compasses

by providing multiple perspectives of main characters and by following the perceived hero and villain through constant parallels. *Daredevil* is unique in providing this type of moral engagement to its viewership and allows audiences to critically engage with the narrative in a way that other antihero narratives do not.

In the Netflix original series Marvel's *Daredevil*, we are introduced to the impossible, as a blind man with extraordinary senses becomes a masked vigilante, fighting to save his city from the everyday evils of rapists and robbers. The setting is Hell's Kitchen, New York, and takes place over the course of 13 one-hour long episodes. This man, Matt Murdock, does not fall into the stereotypical hero narrative. Instead, he is consistently on the threshold between traditional definitions of good and evil. His intentions are not always pure, and his methods often lead his victims to serious injury or death.

Also fighting to protect the city from everyday evils is Wilson Fisk, a philanthropist and the secret leader of a drug organization. He closely parallels Murdock in his intentions to save the city, and believes that Murdock is another element that threatens Hell's Kitchen. He also is teetering on the fence between good and evil. His intentions are both pure and impure, but his methods are not, leaving his opposition blackmailed or dead. Even though the viewers are prompted to believe that Murdock is the hero and Fisk is the villain, in Hell's Kitchen's public eye, Murdock, as the vigilante Daredevil, is cursed by the people as the villain, and Fisk is praised as the hero. What makes the show stand out among other antihero narratives is the degree to which it utilizes parallelism to showcase both Murdock's and Fisk's struggle between good and evil.

During the course of season one of *Daredevil*, one of the main ways that Murdock and Fisk are paralleled is through their representation in the fictional media of Hell's Kitchen. These media representations challenge the idea that intentions are what define a hero. Regardless of his intentions, the news causes the public to write Murdock's alter ego off as a criminal and a villain. The fictional public is quick to believe in the media's presentation of an uncomplicated morality and are ready to pursue Murdock as the villain, but the narrative encourages the viewers to reject this simplistic idea and to further engage with the moral complexity of the character. During the episode "Condemned" (Season 1 Episode 6), Murdock, as Daredevil, is filmed via security camera fighting and beating dirty cops, who had been ordered by Fisk to murder surviving members of a bomb explosion. Fisk has many connections within the news industry, and points the crews in the direction of the footage after deleting the evidence of police officers harming the survivors.

Soon the footage is released along with a story about the masked vigilante as a domestic terrorist. While Murdock's best friends Foggy and Karen, who are unaware of his double life, are in the hospital, they are confronted with that news story.

The scene opens with a muted television playing the New York News, which is mounted on a plain wall in a plain hospital room, causing the television set to stand out. Foggy and Karen's sudden concern when watching the news emphasizes the importance of the media to everyday citizens. Foggy is in a stark white hospital gown and bed, which portrays his belief in a stark black and white sense of morality. Karen uses a black jacket as a blanket, and when she stands, reveals that she



FIGURE 1

is wearing a dark red shirt (see Fig. 1). As the scene continues, Foggy embodies the news broadcast viewership, as he takes the video as proof that Daredevil must be a villain. Karen is against this idea, and her clothing displays her allegiance with Daredevil, who wears all black clothing and whose final costume is all red. As stated in *Hollywood Costumes*, “Nothing that appears on screen is causal or accidental” (51). Their clothing intentionally reveals that Foggy has become the embodiment of the public within the narrative and Karen now represents the viewers. Karen, similar to the viewers, has insight into Daredevil's intentions and wants to believe the best in his actions. On the other hand, Foggy is completely oblivious to Daredevil's intentions, and decides to trust the media regarding Daredevil's moral character over Karen's opinions. Foggy deems Daredevil a villain, becoming the face of the majority's opinion and amplifying the belief that the public is easily swayed over who to classify as a villain.

In the news story, the footage of Daredevil's fight is broadcast in black and grey, demonstrating that he has not completely crossed over the threshold into being a villain. The black and grey video shows that he is in between good and evil. The black in the video represents his newly minted perception as a villain. Since the media condemned him to the stereotype of a villain, it is easier to highlight characteristics that match with this persona than to search for proof that he is a hero. The grey in the video shows that he not completely stuck in the definition of a villain because his intentions are pure, similar to a hero. The reason that the footage is not in black and white is because *Daredevil* has both of the characteristics of a hero and a villain, and he is in the grey area of morality with more potential of crossing into the evil side than the good side. Regardless of the viewer's familiarity with Murdock's moral dilemma, to the citizens of Hell's Kitchen he is the villain.

Fisk's media perception parallels Daredevil's. The public has no knowledge of who Wilson Fisk was prior to a press conference he held in the episode "Shadows in the Glass" (Season 1 Episode 8). Fisk is dressed in a light grey jacket with a black undershirt, displaying his dark hidden intentions and his outward attempts to change from apparent villain to hero. He is shown in the black and grey color scheme in parallel to Murdock's black and grey broadcast. Both of these characters are shown in black and grey in the narrative because of their conflicting moral compasses. Murdock and Fisk are in the grey area of morality, and are both leaning towards the dark side.

An analysis of the extras within the press conference scene reveal that all of the news crews covering the press conference, who are beholden to Fisk, are in shades of black. Ann Hollander, author of *Seeing Through Clothes*, discusses the costuming of extras by stating that "the extras automatically convey more than the principle actors... do" (238). Their costuming communicates that the media is on the side of darkness along with Fisk. The representation of the people in control of the media promotes that Fisk is the villain, and that their allegiance with him is one that belongs outside of morality. However, the public watching the press conference has no knowledge about the media's alliance with Fisk, and continues to take all of the information presented to them as the truth. Since the media glorifies him as having crossed the threshold into heroism, the public rejoices at Fisk the hero.

During the press conference, Fisk is center frame and does not look directly into the camera until the end of his speech. At the end of the speech, he states his name and his intention of making the city a better place. He almost spits the words

out, like he was trying to force them from his mouth and distance himself from their meanings. As the viewer, we know that his real intention is to, in fact, make the city better. His disgust with the words he is speaking comes from his overall hatred of how he believes he has to go about fixing the city. He acknowledges to his confidants that he does not want to be the monster, yet his actions and his ways of trying to help the city are traditionally villainous. This ambiguous morality lines up with the argument made by Lynnette Porter, David Lavery, and Hillary Robson in their book *Saving The World: A Guide To Heroes*, which explains the fact that, within antihero narratives, “a potential hero seems just as capable of acts ranging from theft to murder as . . . readily labeled villains” (131). Fisk’s intentions are pure. He wishes to save Hell’s Kitchen, and, even though his actions are traditionally villainous, it is completely within the conventions of the antihero narrative to establish him as a hero. Regardless of how he is perceived by the viewer, however, Fisk’s media perception allows him to readily be considered a hero within the realm of *Daredevil*.

While the media portrayals of these two characters challenge viewer expectations, each of their love interests serve to reassure the men that they are both the heroes of the city. These love interests reaffirm the belief that good intentions keep both Murdock and Fisk on their appropriate side of morality, and that their methods are a heroic way to achieve their goals. Fisk and Murdock’s love interests, Vanessa and Claire, respectively, are shown as the saving grace to their actions. Each man commits horrendous acts, and is assuaged of their guilt by their love interests’ reactions. The most prominent example of this is Murdock’s love interest, Claire, in “Cut Man” (Season 1 Episode 2). Murdock, as Daredevil, has kidnapped a mob member that is out to hunt him, and has the mobster restrained on the roof. Claire is initially against Daredevil’s interrogation tactics, but once she hears about the mobster’s role in human trafficking, Claire steps forward and offers a location to stab the man in order to achieve the most pain while leaving him able to speak.

In this scene, Claire is mostly shown in medium shots, and she is clothed in white, a stark contrast with Daredevil’s all black uniform. Together, their costuming creates an angel and devil effect, at first displaying that the two are on opposite sides of the morality spectrum. When the frame switches to a long shot, however, it becomes clear that Claire’s white jacket and facemask are paired with grey pants and black shoes. This costuming choice allows for her to have the appearance of a classically angelic character, while foreshadowing the fact that she may not be entirely on the side of morality. Additionally, Claire is presented from behind

Daredevil and can only be seen over his right shoulder for most of the scene (see Fig. 2). Since at this angle the only portion of her costume the viewer can see is white, Claire appears to mimic an angel on his shoulder. A clear shot with Claire and Daredevil in focus would show that both of them were completely decided on both their course of action and their position on the morality spectrum. However, the shots are slightly blurry. For Daredevil, he is trying to gauge how to interrogate the man in a way that will allow him to achieve a hero status. But for Claire, these blurry shots suggest that even though she appears to be pure of intention, she remains undecided about where she lies on the morality spectrum. The blurry shots



FIGURE 2

in addition to her costuming construct a visual image of Claire as a false savior, whose involvement does not actually give Murdock's methods the approval from the heroic side contrary to what he believes.

Claire's involvement and apparent approval give Murdock the appearance of being on the supposed heroic side of morality, and challenge the definition of how these characters can be classified as good or evil. The traditional sense of being good or evil has to do with the intentions of the person, as pure intentions and motivations are what deem them a hero or villain. Murdock is often presented to the audience as the hero of the piece, but this is being challenged here since Murdock reveals that he hurts his victims because "[he] enjoy[s] it" (Season 1 Episode 2). Although his goal is to protect the city, his intentions are not entirely pure. He uses violence as a means of releasing his anger in addition to protecting citizens. According to classic hero and villain definitions, his enjoyment when committing

acts of torture and violence leads him to become the villain of the piece. However, Murdock's perception of Claire is that she is highly moral; therefore her participation in his torturing leads Murdock to believe that he is also moral. Claire's participation in Daredevil's actions relieves him of the evil qualities of his intentions, and causes him to believe in his own heroism and morality.

Similarly, Fisk's relationship with the character Vanessa places Fisk on the right side of morality by assuaging him of the guilt of murdering his father, paralleling Claire's role for Murdock. In the episode "Shadows in the Glass" (Season 1 Episode 8), Fisk tells Vanessa, his girlfriend, about a time in his childhood where



FIGURE 3

his abusive father was attacking his mother. In order to save his mother, Fisk killed his father with a hammer. During the course of Fisk's story, Vanessa is shown only through close-ups from behind Fisk's shoulders (see Fig. 3). Similar to Claire's costuming, Vanessa is dressed in all white and she is shot in this specific way in order to give the impression of an angel on Fisk's shoulder. However, where Claire's costuming revealed her inner conflict, Vanessa's only serves to show that she is convinced that she is on the right side of morality. She is shown in focused shots and is completely covered in white. Because of her costuming, Vanessa is shown to be comparatively more moral than Claire. From head to toe she is covered in a bright white color that stands out against the grey and black of Fisk's apartment. Her approval and forgiveness are essentially worth more weight, and allow Fisk to have more assurance that he is more moral than Murdock.



After Fisk recounts the story to Vanessa, she tells Fisk that he was trying to protect his mother and that the intentions behind his actions are what make it heroic. Fisk's intentions are pure. When explaining why he wears his abusive father's cufflinks, Fisk states that he wants to remember that he is not a monster like his father, that "[he is] not cruel for the sake of cruelty" (Season 1 Episode 8). Where Fisk and Murdock's costuming are mirrored with both in all black, this statement about Fisk's lack of enjoyment he gains when committing his crimes is completely opposite to Murdock's feelings. According to traditional definitions of a hero and a villain, Fisk is the hero in this sense.

The two interactions are cinematically paralleled and perform the same function. Both Murdock and Fisk have what they believe to be the approval of the good side of morality. This idea reshapes the concept of traditional hero and villain characters by allowing Murdock and Fisk to battle with their own sense of morality while having them both believe they are the solitary hero in the piece. The parallelism between Fisk and Vanessa's interaction and Murdock and Claire's implies that Fisk and Murdock are similar when it comes to their struggle with placing themselves on the morality spectrum.

Marvel's *Daredevil* explores the idea that traditional characterizations of good and evil are obsolete in comparison to antihero characters on the threshold between hero and villain. *Daredevil* begs viewers to morally engage with the narrative. Viewers are asked to critically evaluate the moral ambiguity of these characters and are trusted to place themselves in the *Daredevil* universe. The latter is not a difficult feat to accomplish considering that the moral quandaries the characters deal with are incredibly realistic. The question of what it actually means to be good or evil is what places these characters within the grey area of morality. Characters' intentions arise when discussing this issue, whether or not they meant harm or whether their intent was pure. While this is the classical determination of who is good and who is evil, it is more appropriate to refer to the public's perception and judgment of the character. In the world of *Daredevil*, Fisk is the hero and Murdock is the villain. While neither of these characters can be considered fully on one end of the spectrum or the other, when it comes down to placing them in specific areas, the voice of the public holds the most weight. The citizens of Hell's Kitchen get to decide their position on the spectrum, but their opinion is not the end of the discussion. Traditional definitions of heroes and villains place Murdock and Fisk into boxes of what a hero or a villain should be. The unique trait about *Daredevil* as an antihero narrative is that both of these characters can exist simultaneously as both hero and

villain. Traditional definitions cannot hold these morally complex characters under a single label. The idea of good or evil does not define who these truly characters are. In this sense, the traditional good versus evil dynamic crumbles in the face of the Marvel characters' interpretation of real-world issues and moral dilemmas.

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# TAYLOR HEGGEN

Taylor Heggen is a senior majoring in English with a minor in Women's and Gender Studies. Her interests beyond literature include cultural and media studies, especially pertaining to gender and feminist theory. *Lolita* has always been a source of hermeneutic confusion for Taylor and she is thankful to *NOMAD* and the Comparative Literature department for providing a conducive space to finally think through this confusion.

Mentor: **Ying Xiong**

## MORAL THRESHOLDS, “NYMPHETS,” AND THE DIALOGIC IMAGINATION OF NABOKOV’S *LOLITA*

SINCE 1955, VLADIMIR NABOKOV’S *LOLITA* has grown from a mousy-haired girl of twelve to a blonde, teenage sex kitten. As a story about the sexual relationship between a seventh grader and a college professor, one might think that *Lolita* would have gone out of print years ago. And yet, when one thinks of *Lolita* today, it is more probable that an image of heart shaped glasses framing knowing blue eyes and lollipop-red-stained lips is conjured than the lanky Dolores Haze described by Nabokov in his original. While many have found textual evidence to support this interpretation, relying on it fails to critically consider the dialogic space constructed by Nabokov in the original text.

Though some attribute *Lolita*’s cultural transformation to larger factors such as the story’s emergence into popular culture (see Graham Vickers), the sexualization of increasingly younger women (see M. Gigi Durham), or, on the other hand, women’s sexual liberation (see Simone de Beauvoir)—and while it is most certainly a combination of all—it can also be traced back to Nabokov’s original work. As a contemporary of Nabokov, Russian Formalist Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of dialogic imagination not only provides a useful framework for considering the moral space constructed within the text, but also how this space has been transformed and represented since publication. In his book *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin outlines

the ways in which the novel genre utilizes structure and language to construct its own peculiar discourse. In the fourth and final essay of the text, “Discourse in the Novel,” Bakhtin explains that “form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon—social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning” (Bakhtin). In her essay, “Behind Bakhtin: Russian Formalism and Kristeva’s Intertextuality,” Bakhtin scholar Andrea Lešic-Thomas articulates this idea more specifically in terms of character development. She explains that, for Bakhtin,

the character is the ideologue, his or her actions are fully motivated by the ideas in which he or she believes. These ideas are not something which is mechanically grafted onto the character but are taken up by the whole of their ‘personality,’ as his or her words and ideas enter into dialogical relations with the words and ideas of other characters and those of the author, and as a result, the character is, much like the human subject, always open to change and never truly finalized. (Lesic-Thomas 5)

Through a blend of formal and linguistic manipulation, Nabokov constructs Humbert as the “ideologue,” and allows him to construct the characterization of Lolita. And though as readers we have the agency to interpret, we are also required to engage with Humbert’s peculiar moral thresholds if we plan to engage with the text or its narrator. Hidden behind the discourse of the novel, Nabokov navigates his readers through the text without overtly manipulating them, creating a dialogic space that separates the events of his novel from the reader’s personal moral perspective. Under Humbert’s—and Nabokov’s—narrative control, Lolita appears to present herself as the ideal “nymphet,” perfectly designed to fulfill Humbert’s particular pedophilic inclinations, but only within a literary space that constructs a threshold defining sex with a “nymphet” as distinctly different from sex with other adolescent girls. Unfortunately for Lolita, failing to critically consider the narrative construction of “nymphet,” and thereby falling victim to Humbert’s dialogic space, has allowed readers to cross a similar interpretive threshold from victim to agent, thereby making room for readings of *Lolita* that not only disregard the harmful reality of her situation, but even put the responsibility of the novel’s events on her shoulders.

Nabokov allows Humbert to take the responsibility of characterizing Lolita, but carefully frames this around a subtle dialogue that similarly works to frame

Humbert's character. Separating himself from Humbert's narration, Nabokov first frames the text through the perspective of the man responsible for editing Humbert's original manuscript for print, John Ray, Jr. Although Ray acknowledges that his editing "task proved simpler than...anticipated," owing to his having only corrected "obvious solecisms" and "a few tenacious details," he complicates Humbert's role as the sole authority figure within the text by becoming the final authority over the work (Nabokov 3). Further, he provides numerous clues that not only reveal Humbert's unreliability as a narrator but also the carefully constructed dialogue created by its framing. For instance, Ray explains that the "writer of the present note," Humbert Humbert, "had died in legal captivity, of coronary thrombosis on November 16, 1952, a few days before his trial was scheduled to start" (Nabokov 3). Later, the reader realizes that the entire text has in fact been composed for the "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury" (Nabokov 9). In revealing these details, Ray draws the reader's attention to the peculiar circumstances under which the following pages have been composed, not only under the threat of legal imposition, but also in a sanitized past, effectively isolated from the necessity of moral involvement or investment on behalf of the reader. Of *Lolita*, it is clarified that "Mrs. 'Richard F Schiller' died in childbed giving birth to a stillborn girl on Christmas day 1952" (Nabokov 4). Dying only a few weeks after Humbert, *Lolita* similarly exists isolated in the past. The narrative decision to refer to her as "Mrs. 'Richard F Schiller'" not only indicates the exploitative nature of *Lolita's* relationship to men within the text, but also isolates the information of her death to an unknowing reader, further isolating them from her situation as a victim (Nabokov 4).

Bakhtin explains in "Discourse in the Novel" that "heterogeneous stylistic unities" such as Nabokov's Foreword and the narration that follow, "combine to form a structured artistic system and are subordinated to the higher stylistic unity of the work as a whole" (Bakhtin). As a lone entity, John Ray, Jr.'s foreword is odd at best, but taken in conversation with the trajectory of the text that follows, reveals the complex discourse of morality at work within the text. This structured artistic system not only has implications for the characters within the text, but also for the reader engaging with the text. For instance, Ray ends his foreword by acknowledging the predatory nature of Humbert's story while simultaneously encouraging readers to focus on the "scientific significance," "literary worth," and most importantly, the "ethical impact" of the text instead of the morally-questionable implications of its content (Nabokov 5). By encouraging readers to approach the text from a more scientific position, the foreword condones the exploitative nature of

the text in the name of social and ethical understanding, encouraging readers to momentarily sustain their own moral thresholds in the name of moral and cultural education. Ray acknowledges early in his statement that “Viewed simply as a novel, *Lolita* deals with situations and emotions that would remain exasperatingly vague to the reader had their expression been etiolated by means of platitudinous evasions” (Nabokov 4). He clarifies:

True not a single obscene term is to be found in the whole work...  
If, however...an editor attempted to dilute or omit scenes that a certain type of mind might call “aphrodisiac”...one would have to forego the publication of *Lolita* altogether, since those very scenes that one might ineptly accuse of a sensuous existence of their own, are the most strictly functional ones in the development of a tragic tale tending unswervingly to nothing less than a moral apotheosis. (Nabokov 4–5)

He encourages his readers to understand the text as more than a novel; rather, it is presented as a case study of pathological behavior. Further, he insists that readers refrain from “ineptly [accusing]” the morally questionable aspects of the text and instead enter the moral and logistical perspective of a mad man in order to understand his motivations (Nabokov 5).

By including the gritty details of *Lolita*’s sexual coming-of-age, particularly from Humbert’s narrative perspective, Ray insists that he only means to avoid etiolating his text when in reality, their inclusion only operates to perpetuate *Lolita*’s exploitation. For Ray, the inclusion of “aphrodisiac” scenes is necessary to avoid the vagueness produced by “platitudinous evasions,” in spite of the fact that his very characterization of their sexual exchanges as “aphrodisiac” undermines the unbalanced nature of Humbert and *Lolita*’s relationship in the first place (Nabokov 4). Elizabeth Patnoe discusses this reenactment of writing and reading out trauma in her essay, “*Lolita* Misrepresented, *Lolita* Reclaimed: Disclosing the Doubles.” After briefly describing the sexual trauma of a colleague, Patnoe questions, “Is this shocking to you? Do you feel that in my writing it and your reading it, this person’s trauma has been re-enacted? It has—through her, through and for me, and for you. And I imposed this trauma on you, thrust it into your eyes without your consent” (Patnoe 87). By characterizing the events of *Lolita* as not only “remarkable,” but somehow crucial to the moral upbringing of future generations, Ray’s foreword acknowledges *Lolita*’s suffering while subverting its relevance for what can be gained by a study of Humbert’s deviance (Nabokov 5). Instead of acknowledging *Lolita*’s

status as a victim, Ray describes her as a “wayward child” with an “egotistic mother,” providing the reader with a glossed explanation for Lolita falling into the hands of a “panting maniac” like Humbert (Nabokov 5). What’s more, by providing this simplified explanation, he erases the reader’s need look any closer at the dynamics of power that produce the relationship in the first place. Instead, readers are urged to focus on the “potent evils” that threaten “the task of bringing up a better generation in a safer world,” evils that are not exclusive to Humbert, but rather plague both Lolita as a “wayward child” and her “egotistic mother” as well (Nabokov 5, 6). In effect, the foreword not only justifies the content of the novel to Nabokov’s readers, but more importantly encourages them to sustain their own moral judgment for the sake of a sort of a moral “apotheosis” promised at the end (Nabokov 5).

After de-centering readers’ moral thresholds with his foreword, Nabokov hands the pen to Humbert, who continues to construct the moral space of the novel. Though Humbert’s voice dominates the rest of the text, silencing and erasing his fellow characters, the nuances of his re-telling produce a dialogic space in themselves. In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin describes the importance of the “authentic environment of an utterance,” by explaining that, “the environment in which it lives and takes shape, is dialogized heteroglossia, anonymous and social as language, but simultaneously concrete, filled with specific content and accented as an individual utterance” (Bakhtin). In the Introduction to *The Dialogic Imagination*, editor Michael Holquist clarifies this idea more efficiently, explaining that “Language, when it means, is somebody talking to somebody else, even when that someone else is one’s own inner addressee” (Holquist). While Nabokov draws on form to build a space of interpretive complexity between the foreword and the rest of the text, Humbert similarly capitalizes on the linguistic “utterances” available to him as the narrative authority to construct a space of interpretive confusion between himself and Lolita.

In his essay, “Tolstoy and Nabokov,” Brian Boyd explains that in these opening lines, “Humbert presents himself as a romantic, a lover whose love elevates Lolita to heights beyond her mundane world of teenage moods and modes” (Boyd 240). Though less than half of a page, Humbert’s notorious opening lines indicate the extent to which he manipulates the reader’s ability to objectively understand their relationship. He begins:

Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. Lo-lee-ta:

the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps down the palate  
to tap, at three, on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta. (Nabokov 9)

The initial paragraph begins with a fragmented sentence, excluding a verb and thereby eliminating the ability for the character Lolita to act as the subject of the sentence. Rather, Lolita's subjecthood is literally and figuratively taken away. What's more, the parallel phrases following her name, "light of my life, fire of my loins," place the emphasis on the double prepositions "of my..." drawing the reader's attention to Humbert as opposed to Lolita (Nabokov 9). Humbert ends with the three ticks: "Lo," "Lee," and "Ta" (Nabokov 9). By breaking Lolita's name down even more, she is further fragmented to the reader. Written as though read phonetically, the reader's experience also becomes dependent on the speaker's experience. Boyd observes in another essay, "Literature, Pattern, *Lolita* or Art, Literature, Science," that "Lolita's name supplies the first word of Humbert's text and the last. His attention is obsessively on her, and he cannot introduce her name without caressing each syllable with lips and tongue" (Boyd 328). As Boyd points out, there is no opportunity for Lolita herself to supply the first or last words of the text that is titled for her. Rather, Humbert's *obsession* with Lolita ends up taking center stage of the novel.

Humbert justifies this obsession by constructing what he terms "nymphets" (Nabokov 16). In doing so, Humbert constructs his motivations within a moral threshold that justifies seeking sexual gratification from a pre-pubescent child as long as that child falls under the category "nymphet." He explains that he would "have the reader see 'nine' and 'fourteen' as the boundaries," but clarifies, "Between those age limits, are all girl-children nymphets? Of course not," he adds that "neither are good looks a criterion" (Nabokov 16). Instead, Humbert bases this category off of the child's behavior, or rather, his interpretation of this behavior. He explains for instance that "vulgarity, or at least what a given community terms so, does not necessarily impair certain mysterious characteristics, the fey grace, the elusive, shifty, soul-shattering, insidious charm" (Nabokov 17). Even so, "You have to be an artist and a madman...in order to discern at once, by ineffable signs—the slightly feline outline of a cheekbone, the slenderness of a downy limb, and other indices which despair and shame and tears of tenderness forbid me to tabulate" (Nabokov 17). In other words, only one who shares Humbert's pedophilic inclinations is able to determine between which girls are asking for it, and which are simply asking for a day trip to "Our Glass Lake" (Nabokov 45). As Graham Vickers notes in his book, *Chasing Lolita: How Popular Culture Corrupted Nabokov's Little*



*Girl All Over Again*, “Lolita’s sex appeal would have been elusive to all but a pedophile with a very specific shopping list of expectations” (Vickers 8). Even so, upon entering into the dialogic space of the narrative, readers become unavoidably complicit in constructing this demarcation, impacting the ability to objectively interpret Lolita’s character once she is finally introduced. By framing Lolita as an inherent “nymphet” and framing “nymphets” behavior as inherently sexual, Humbert likewise constructs Lolita’s character as inseparable from his sexualization of her.

Throughout the text, Humbert purports to have a knack for distinguishing between the mundane and meaningful and works hard to convince the reader of this skill, especially in the case of the girl-children he defines as “nymphets.” In his essay, “Nabokov as Storyteller,” Boyd explains of Nabokov’s unique use of character:

Like many writers from Sterne and Austen on, Nabokov drives stories by means of character rather than plot. But his stories are unique in their intense focus on one character. Nabokov respects individual experience as primary, as all that any of us can know from the inside. Each of his novels highlights the centrality and isolation of the consciousness of the hero. Usually there will be a marked disparity between the individual and his (it is almost without exception his) environment...He will usually be driven by an obsession—love, chess, art, murder, a real or imagined lost homeland. (Boyd 159)

For the purposes of *Lolita*, Nabokov constructs this motivation around Humbert’s unfulfilled longing to enjoy the companionship of a “nymphet.” This idea reads as morally appropriate in the dialogic space of the novel based on the construction of “nymphets” as *already* sexually aware. For instance, Vickers notes in his book that the “villain” of the text, Claire Quilty, “had already lasciviously fondled ten-year-old Lolita on his lap over two years before Humbert managed, eventually, to improve on the trick on the Haze sofa” (Vickers 14). By constructing Lolita as youthful but far from sexually naive, Humbert further removes himself from the responsibility of their relationship, likewise moving Lolita closer to the threshold of agency. Even so, an examination of the “marked disparity” that Boyd describes between Humbert and his environment indicates a highly manipulative understanding of his reality (Boyd 159). While Lolita does admit openly to being sexually knowledgeable to a certain degree, the base of this knowledge comes into question when one looks closer at the dialogic space created between the objective reality of their rela-

tionship and Humbert's hyper-controlling fantasy. In his book, Vickers is similarly critical of Humbert's construction, describing Humbert as "having strained every nerve to contrive the intimacy" of their first sexual encounter (Vickers 15). Though Vickers refers to Humbert's attempts to drug and rape Lolita, the same can be said for the manner in which he represents her language.

Earlier in the discussion of "nymphets," I referenced Humbert's perceived ability to distinguish between mundane requests and sexual invitations. This takes shape concretely within Humbert's diary, eclipsing chapter 11. Though the reader is finally given the opportunity to interact with Lolita, it is only through the highly contrived manner through which Humbert expresses their "intimate" moments. As a result of the formal restrictions of the epistolary form, Humbert has the opportunity to construct Lolita in an intimate space that excuses his fantastical objectification of her as a consequence. While Humbert manages to re-iterate some of the conversations held between them in the first months of meeting, these conversational moments are often presented as fragments or interjections overshadowed by Humbert's longer, complex meditations and observations. For instance, he recalls Lolita's request to "make Mother take you and me to Our Glass Lake Tomorrow" (Nabokov 45). Humbert seizes the "intimate" opportunity to describe the circumstances to his reader:

These were the textual words said to me by my twelve-year-old-flame in a voluptuous whisper, as we happened to bump into one another on the front porch, I out, she in. The reflection of the afternoon sun, a dazzling white diamond with innumerable iridescent spikes quivered on the round back of a parked car. (Nabokov 45)

Without Humbert's additional contextualization, Lolita's mundane request to visit a nearby lake the following day carries minimal sexual connotation. With the interpolation of Humbert's scene-setting, ripe with sexual undertones, Lolita's request is suddenly charged with erotic and secretive implications; increasing its readability as one of sexual advance as opposed to an ordinary request from an ordinary child. By subverting Lolita's actual request to the domineering framework of Humbert's interpretation, Nabokov draws the reader's attention to the manipulative way in which Humbert internalizes and then re-interprets Lolita's request. It is in such a way that Humbert continues to twist Lolita's representation, manipulating their encounters to better align with his construction of "nymphet" and the moral space of the novel.

As noted previously, many scholars and critics, such as Graham Vickers and

Elizabeth Patnoe, have produced interesting analyses regarding Lolita and Humbert's first sexual act. Some cite this episode in support of her agency as she is perceived to initiate the encounter. For instance, in spite of his initial plans to drug and rape Lolita in her sleep, operating on the “policy of sparing her purity by operating only in the stealth of night,” Humbert instead insists: “It was she who seduced me” (Nabokov 124, 132). Following a colon within the syntactical structure of the text as well, this statement drastically shifts the trajectory of the novel, taking the responsibility of the encounter away from Humbert and directing it at Lolita. In spite of Lolita's drugged state, isolation from an absent mother (who is, in fact, dead, though Humbert hides this unpleasant fact until after sex), and obvious position of vulnerability at the hands of a coercive guardian, some critics argue that this shift reasonably calls into question Lolita's access to power and agency against Humbert. Even so, as Elizabeth Patnoe points out in her essay, since Humbert “wants to acquit himself of the accusation of rape, wants to convince us that in this scene Lolita seduces him to intercourse, he must narrate in gaps, must not tell us who initiates certain acts, must use elusive language, must be self-protectively discreet” (Patnoe 95). Reminiscent of his diary, Humbert begins his narration using longer, complex sentences to describe the encounter as he experiences it. He interjects briefly to mention and summarize for the reader how he perceives Lolita's experience. He begins:

All at once, with a burst of rough glee (the sign of the nymphet!), she put her mouth to my ear—but for quite a while my mind could not separate into words the hot thunder of her whisper, and she laughed, and brushed the hair off her face, and tried again, and gradually the odd sense of living in a brand new, mad new dream world, where everything was permissible came over me as I realized what she was suggesting. I answered I did not know what game she and Charlie had played. (Nabokov 133)

While at first this interaction might appear as one of mutual affection, Nabokov provides the reader with clues for better understanding the true nature of their encounter. As Humbert remains fixed on describing the apparent sensuality of the moment, illustrated by his reference to the “hot thunder of her whisper,” he noticeably brushes by the specific details of it, mentioning in three quick breaths that “she laughed, and brushed her hair off her face, and tried again” before Humbert arrives at the action of the sentence: his realization of her suggestion (Nabokov 133). Noticeably, Humbert fails to provide the reader with Lolita's suggestion.

Rather, Humbert asserts, “I answered I did not know what game she and Charlie had played” (Nabokov 133). In effect, Humbert eliminates the reader’s ability to objectively interpret any of Lolita’s interactions, instead replacing them with his own understanding.

This subversion continues to the end of the paragraph in which Humbert utilizes a parenthetical to explain: “(It was very curious the way she considered—and kept doing so for a long time—all caresses except kisses on the mouth or the stark act of love either ‘romantic slosh’ or ‘abnormal’)” (Nabokov 133). By including this detail, Humbert briefly provides a frank observation of Lolita’s apparent lack of understanding and comfort with his sexual advances. Even so, by formatting this observation as a parenthetical, Humbert thereby frames it as an after-thought, indicating the possibility that this seemingly vital information may have originally been interpreted as unimportant, or at least less important than Lolita’s willingness to engage in the act itself. Read alongside Humbert’s insistence on referring to their sex act as a child’s “game,” Nabokov inclines readers to acknowledge the obvious differences in understanding between Lolita and Humbert (Nabokov 133). As Humbert himself casually states on the next page, “she was not quite prepared for certain discrepancies between a kid’s life and mine. Pride alone prevented her from giving up” (Nabokov 134). By evading the reality of Lolita’s experiences and instead framing them as a natural progression of Lolita’s sexual coming-of-age, Humbert disguises the horror of coercive rape behind the dialogical imagination of the novel, a space in which “nymphets” are defined by their sexual availability to older men.

While Nabokov includes many subtle clues regarding the reality of Lolita’s experiences, these clues have often been overshadowed by the dialogic space constructed by the text, making it difficult to construct an image of Lolita separate from the image presented by Humbert. In her essay, Elizabeth Patnoe explains that “the text itself promotes misreadings of *Lolita* because, as Wayne Booth is one of the first to note, Humbert’s skillful rhetoric and Nabokov’s narrative technique make it difficult to locate both Humbert’s unreliability and Nabokov’s moral position” (Patnoe 83). Even so, for Patnoe, Nabokov’s moral position and presence within the text is clear, although subtle, and offers “a critique of the misogyny illustrated in and purveyed by the rest of the text” (Patnoe 83). Though Patnoe acknowledges the peculiar moral space constructed by Humbert, she also finds responsibility for Lolita’s continued exploitation with the “many co-opted Lolita myths circulating in our culture,” which encourage readers to “come to Lolita inundated with a hege-

monic reading of evil Lolita and bad female sexuality, an overdetermined reading that then imposes itself upon its own text” (Patnoe 84). By drawing these connections, Patnoe draws our attention to the peculiar interpretive discrepancies that readings of *Lolita* have since produced. On one hand, Nabokov’s subtle presence rewards close readers with a “critique of the misogyny illustrated in the text” (Patnoe 83). Even so, it is clear that under the “hegemonic reading” that Patnoe cites, the inclusion of these moments not only operate to humanize Humbert’s moral conflict but similarly allows him to create a space in which his sexual relationship with a pre-pubescent child falls into a realm of moral confusion as opposed to sheer corruption (Patnoe 83). Unless one takes into account the dialogic space constructed within the text, these details fail to effectively define Lolita’s victimization, instead allowing readers enough interpretive space to define her role within the text as agent rather than victim.

Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita* may at first appear as a type of tortured romance. By looking closely at the ways in which Nabokov stylizes both Humbert and Lolita, especially in relation to one another and the unity of the work as a whole, the reality of Lolita’s status as a victim becomes difficult to ignore. While Lolita’s character has since been appropriated and used in popular culture as a means of exploring the sexuality—and sexualization—of young girls, it is clear that Nabokov’s original conceptualization of Lolita was significantly more critical of the ways in which female interests are often subverted for their male counterparts. Paying closer attention to the ways in which Nabokov constructs Lolita through the voice of Humbert reveals a much more complex arrangement of power and a highly subjective representation of his reality. Though the moral threshold on which Nabokov constructs his novel may at first appear less than ethical, a closer investigation reveals a much more defined idea of morality; one that is not accepting of the victimization of a young child for an adult’s sexual pleasure, but rather is highly critical of any society which accepts this marker as their own threshold.

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## SANCHO'S REALITY-BASED PERCEPTIONS OF FANTASY: THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL THRESHOLD OF REALITY AND THE FANTASTICAL

WHEN DISCUSSING THE THRESHOLD between fantasy and reality, literary writers give most attention to the mad knight, Don Quijote, created by Miguel de Cervantes. Mistakenly, little attention is given to, his (mostly) staunch companion, Sancho Panza. This is due to a representation of Sancho as simply a fool with a “credulous nature” who is overall convinced by Don Quijote’s unrelenting faith in the fantastical chivalric world (Worden 501). However, Sancho’s belief is not so easily won. In order to believe in fantasy, Sancho requires certain kinds of evidence and motivation. These are his real-world self-interests, and sensorial stimulation, which alters his affective state; these guide his belief over the threshold into fantasy. Sancho believes in fantasy because of these stimuli, which ironically come from the realm of reality and not fantasy. Therefore, Sancho’s belief is dictated by external and internal influences, and he believes in fantasy only when reality is the origin of his belief. Sancho’s processing of fantasy starts with sensorial stimulations from the exterior, then its effect on his interior affective state, and later manifests in an expression into the real world. Sancho’s body is a conduit for this process, and his body is the threshold between reality and fantasy, which receives sensory stimulus and emits affective and physical reactions when he truly believes in fantasy.

We see in various scenes of *Don Quijote de la Mancha I* that Sancho Panza's view of fantasy and reality is fluid. Sancho's bodily senses, affect, and self-interests dictate where he lies on the threshold of fantasy and reality. The term affect is used here, as opposed to emotion, because affect is most in tune with bodily experiences and "generalized sensations," whereas emotions are the names of specific affects and do not always express the body's experience with authenticity (Jameson 28). In various parts of the novel, Sancho and Don Quijote represent dualistic qualities connected to fundamental elements of their contrasting worlds. Don Quijote rarely eats in the novel, displaying a common practice of the medieval chivalric romance where "fasting is a striving for self-purification... [and] nostalgia for 'golden ages' (*siglos dorados*)" (Gould 39). Don Quijote's "attention [is] characteristically directed away from the material world" (Gould 45), whereas Sancho is closely in tune with it. Sancho frequently shows more "interest in sleep and food," giving him a "more real-world presence" in comparison to Don Quijote (Worden 507). This is why affect, which describes the bodily feeling rather than its restrictive name, is best used when speaking about Sancho who is often represented as connected with his body. The term self-interested belief refers to Sancho's wish to believe in fantasy because the fantastical world would allow him to achieve his own self-interests better than reality. Sancho's belief leans toward the fantastical when his affect, affected by his senses and self-interested belief, becomes hyperactive and fearful in moments of struggle. The sources of these influences, and in consequence, Sancho's belief in fantasy, demonstrate that belief in the fantastical can result from certain 'real-world' situations.

I employ Sigmund Freud's essay "The Uncanny" in this paper because it lends insight into how physical senses, the affective states created by the senses, and self-interests can be sources for belief in fantasy. Reality and fantasy are not completely separate, similar to Freud's explanation that "What is *heimlich* [familiar] thus comes to be *unheimlich* [unfamiliar]" (4). The familiar is associated here with reality and the unfamiliar with fantasy. The tension between these two realms creates an uncanny feeling that in turn opens up Sancho's interpretation for a fantastical reality. Freud determines that the uncanny is rooted in reality, often elicited by "repressed complexes," such as animistic tendencies, which reemerge when an event stirs up associated affects and thoughts (19). Similarly, Sancho's belief in fantasy is rooted in reality as well, and drawn out by senses and affects, which connect with "old belief" (Freud 14). The sensations Sancho experiences are familiar, natural phenomena, which cannot always be determined with clarity. This uncanny affect



pushes Sancho's beliefs over the liminal space between reality and fantasy into the fantastical realm. This aspect is what makes the senses, affect, and self-interests key sources for Sancho's belief in fantasy.

Franz Kafka manipulates this threshold by focusing on Sancho and altering the common perception of the novel *Don Quijote de la Mancha* in his short story, "The Truth about Sancho Panza." The story, only two sentences in length, is presented here in its entirety to give some context for what is discussed later:

Without making any boast of it Sancho Panza succeeded in the course of years, by feeding him a great number of romances of chivalry and adventure in the evening and night hours, in so diverting from himself his demon, whom he later called Don Quixote, that this demon thereupon set out, uninhibited, on the maddest exploits, which, however, for the lack of a preordained object, which should have been Sancho Panza himself, harmed nobody. A free man, Sancho Panza philosophically followed Don Quixote on his crusades, perhaps out of a sense of responsibility, and had of them a great and edifying entertainment to the end of his days. (Kafka 43)

Kafka transforms Sancho into the master of his "demon," Don Quijote. By "feeding him...romances of chivalry and adventure," Sancho attempts to be in control and "[divert] from himself his demon;" the demon is from within "himself" and he needs to extract it or push it away. Sancho lets his demon roam the world "uninhibited," yet it harms no one because it lacks a "preordained object, which should have been Sancho." The demon has no predetermined entity or body of its own; therefore, it is not harmful to the real world. In order for fantasy to have any sway in the real world and to be believable, it needs to manifest in a natural form, such as Sancho's body. However, lacking a body, his demon harms no one. Kafka alters the threshold between reality and fantasy, making it a threshold determined by the tension between Sancho's mind and the real world. The fantasy, or "demon," originated inside his head; therefore, the threshold lies between Sancho's interior and exterior worlds. It is a stretch of the imagination if one views Sancho as merely a squire going along with Don Quijote's exploits while not truly believing in his fantasies. However, Sancho's capacity to participate in a fantastical world is very much present in Cervantes' novel.

The first event that allowed Sancho's belief in fantasy to be possible is what Frantz Fanon would call "*le commencement*" (the beginning, the starting point) as rupture... an epistemological revolution" starting with the individual's "awaken-

ing... [in] the form of a psychological *tabula rasa*" (as cited in Vergés 33–4). Of course, "*le commencement*" for Sancho is when Don Quijote asks him to be his squire and promises him a governorship of an *ínsula* (Cervantes VII:163). For Fanon, *le commencement* begins with the individual unconscious, having two levels of liberation: firstly "emancipation from [the self]" and secondly a "swift rupture with the old world" (Vergés 34). However, rather than being an individual, "unconscious...emancipation from himself" (Vergés 34)—or from his demon, as Kafka presented it—Sancho is presented a way to liberation from the exterior world by Don Quijote. The beginning of Sancho's new epistemological development is liberation on the second level of emancipation: "a swift and trenchant rupture with the old world" (Vergés 34). In this manner, Sancho "leaves behind his woman and children and sets out to be a squire" (Cervantes 163). The rupture with the past and his old world sets into play Sancho's "epistemological revolution" which begins to test his beliefs.

One of the first scenes where Sancho's disposition is altered to believe in fantasy is the frightful adventure of chapter XX. The location and suspense demonstrated by the narrator feed into Sancho's senses and his fears to push his belief over the threshold into fantasy. Cervantes uses the role of the narrator like a witness to the scene, never telling the reader what the characters think, but showing what they express outwardly to the exterior world, and sometimes hinting at potential interior affective states. The narrator formulates the scene with suspenseful language and syntax, demonstrating the environment felt by Sancho and Don Quijote: "It was night... , and they decided to enter among some tall trees, whose leaves, moved by the soft wind, made a fearful and gentle stir; so that the loneliness, the place, the darkness, the sound of the water with the rustling of the leaves, all caused horror and fright" (Cervantes 278–9)<sup>1</sup>. The darkness, the sound of the water and the rustle of the leaves, stimulate Sancho's senses of sight and sound and elicit affective states of "horror and fright."

The adventurers move further into the dark grove when they hear a "great din of water" which promises an end to Sancho's thirst (278). However, "they [hear] another ill-timed crash which [spoils] their hopes for the water, especially for Sancho, who [is] naturally fainthearted" (278). The narrative voice describes the crashing sound as "*golpes*"—which could be translated as hits, bangs, or knocking (278). The ambiguous description of the sound Sancho hears creates uncer-

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<sup>1</sup> All translations of the Spanish text are the author's.

tainty about where or who it comes from. Leaving the reader in uncertainty is a device Freud says is “most successful...[for] creating uncanny effects” (5). The reader understands Sancho's uncertainty and is left to wonder if the sound has a fantastical origin. The narrator does not take us within Sancho's mind to be certain of this, yet, he shows us what he experiences and describes certain characteristics of Sancho's disposition.

The narrator represents Sancho as “naturally fainthearted,” saying he is “*medroso y de poco ánimo*” (278). *Medroso* means fearful of anything or fainthearted, and *de poco ánimo* means the same, however, with nuances. *Ánimo* means courage, mind, or the capacity to experience emotions, affects, and to understand; *de poco* means little or small (Real Academia Española n.p.). Therefore, Sancho is described as “fearful and of little courage” or “of little mind,” one could take this to mean of little reason. The narrator tells us Sancho's natural affective state, which is faintheartedness and little capacity to understand the world around him. This description implicitly tells the reader how Sancho perceives the real world, from a paradigm of fear and misunderstanding, which is rooted in his body, the threshold between his interior and exterior worlds. It is a misinterpretation, which originates in his fearful heart, a part of his physical body and exterior world. Therefore, when his body is faced with certain real-world stimuli, which reactivate old, superstitious beliefs, Sancho's fearful heart is susceptible to believing in fantasy.

The narrator skews our belief as well towards fantasy when he personifies the grove in this sentence: “neither the blows ceased, nor the wind slept” (279). The personification and the ambiguous description here is a “particularly favourable condition for awakening uncanny sensations,” by creating an uncertainty whether the source of the sound is alive or not (Freud 8). The origin of the sound Sancho hears is unfamiliar, masked by the familiar sound of water, and whether it is alive is uncertain. Sancho's experience rightly “puts dread in anyone's heart” (Cervantes XX: 278). The narrator addresses the potential state of Sancho's heart, full of dread, describing the affect he experiences through his body, which later manifests into the real world.

In an effort to convince Don Quijote not to enter into, what appears to be, a frightening adventure, Sancho states:

I left my land and left children and a woman to come and serve your worship, thinking that it is worth more and not less; but...I myself have wavering hopes, well, when more lives I have to reach that black and ill-fated *ínsula* your worship has promised so often, I see that, in

payment and in exchange for it, I want now to leave a place so remote from humane treatment... I do not want your worship to desist from undertaking this feat, distend it, at least, until the morning. (280)

Sancho tries so hard to convince his master not to leave him that he enters into the chivalric fantasy world to become more convincing. He uses archaic language used by Don Quixote, saying “fecho” instead of hecho, translated here as “feat.” In order to serve his own self-interests, Sancho passes into the fantasy world, trying to convince Don Quijote to desist from an adventure that could leave Sancho alone, or worse, wounded. He expresses his affect through his body in voice and tears. He mentions everything he cares about in the real world—his wife, children, and land—before entering into the linguistic fantasy. These self-interests from his reality motivate him to enter into the fantasy world with Don Quijote, and to interact with it in order to have a favorable outcome. Sancho firstly believes in fantasy, and interacts with it, only if it serves him. This mindset later changes. Fearing the sound, Sancho ties up Don Quijote’s steed, Rocinante, and leaves his master to believe it to be an enchantment. Thus, they stay the night in the grove.

Sancho and Don Quijote represent dual ideologies, namely bodily needs (reality) and an idealized rejection of bodily needs (fantasy), and this is demonstrated by how Sancho’s fear is forced into the real world through his body. Due to Sancho’s deep, bodily connection with real-world natural phenomena, he is affected physically (and consequently affectively) by the corporeal stimulations of the location. The darkness, the whispering leaves and the unceasing “bangs” (278–9) heighten while also distorting his senses of sight and sound, which are crucial to discerning between reality and fantasy, especially because he is associated with the body, which is a receptor for the senses. In order for Sancho to believe in fantasy, his belief must come from real world stimuli.

While waiting out the apparent enchantment on his steed, Don Quijote comments on Sancho’s emotional and intellectual state saying that “perhaps these blows, which do not stop, must have disturbed your mind” (285). Don Quijote uses the verb *turbar* to describe Sancho’s affective state, which means ‘to disturb’ and more specifically “to alter or interrupt the natural state or course of something” (Real Academia Española n.p.). The sensations Sancho feels, from the natural world, alter his natural state of mind. Instead of being skeptical like he often is, Sancho’s disposition is now altered, and open to fantasy.

Continuing with Sancho’s connection to his body and the physical world, these sensorial stimulations influence his affect and therefore manifest corporally.

His intestines become disturbed in accordance with his affective state. Consequently, “his fear was so great,” that he did, the narrator describes unassumingly, “what no one else could do for him” (285); simply meaning, he needs to relieve his bowels. The whispers and shadows perceived by his senses, and the unknown origin of the sound generate a fear so great within Sancho that he has to release it. Since Sancho is a representation of bodily functions, this fear and distress of his affect manifest appropriately in the natural form of human waste. His body is a receptor to real-world sensations, which are then processed by his affect (his interior imagination), and later emitted outside of himself into reality when his mind decides to believe in the fantasy presented. The fact that it is feces, a very personal and detestable result of being human, connects with Kafka's interpretation of *Quijote*, where the novel, in truth, chronicles the purging of Sancho's demon, an interior struggle that Sancho brings into reality. A creature created and fed chivalric romances by Sancho, much like Sancho's senses feed his body, resulting in uncanny feelings and affects of dread. The physical manifestation releases his fear into the real world, transforming what he sees and hears into a powerful interior affect, and then a bodily reaction. Emitting his affective state into the physical world makes the fantastical outcome more real.

Although Sancho tries to be silent, Don Quijote hears and smells human feces and says, “It seems to me, Sancho, that you have much fear” because “now more than ever you smell, and not of amber” (286). The sense of smell is the only one that is not uncertain or misinterpreted in this passage. Cervantes unknowingly identified what scientific studies have discovered today, that the olfactory sense is too precise to be misinterpreted. Sense of smell unearths “more specific” memories than sense of sound or sight (Larsson, Willander, Karlsson and Arshamian n.p.) and therefore does not elicit an assortment of affects like sight and sound. By eliciting specific memories and thoughts, smell is simply what it is. It cannot be veiled or distorted like sight and sound, which can be unclear or misinterpreted due to the varied memories, thoughts, and emotions it can bring forth. Smells are also “less efficient reminders of past experiences than verbal or visual information” (Larsson et al. n.p.). Therefore, when considering Freud's argument that the uncanny is produced by the re-activation of “old belief” (14), sense of sound and sight conjure up far more memories, and consequently allow for further uncertainty when distinguishing between them. Therefore, the visual and sound cues Sancho receives elicit far more feelings of uncertainty within his body.

Morning comes, and Sancho Panza unties Rocinante; when Don Quijote no-

tices, he takes it as a good sign to pursue the strange sound. He instructs Sancho to give word to his lady Dulcinea de Toboso if he does not return in three days (287). This greatly distresses Sancho, who cries and pleads him not to leave, but Sancho hesitantly follows his master, his “perpetual companion of prosperous and adverse fortunes” (288). Further encouraging a fantastical perception, the narration uses diction that evokes imagery of a great mythical creature. When approaching the noise, the companions come across “shoddy” residences, “looking more like ruins of buildings than houses” (288). The use of “ruins” incites an image of antiquity, ancient ruins of mythical times, when stories of giants and spells were believed to be real. It is a re-activation of primal beliefs, “nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old—established in the mind that has been estranged only by the process of repression” (Freud 13). The diction creates an uncanny feeling; Sancho sees something familiar (of the real world) but unfamiliar (of the fantasy world), making him believe in the existence of a fantastical creature. The narrator’s word choice promotes the expectation for a reemergence of something from mythic times, perhaps a monster about to reveal itself once again after being gone for centuries and merely alive in the primal unconsciousness as Freud suggests.

All of the buildup of fear and suspense is then knocked down animatedly in this line: “And it was (if you do not have it, oh reader!, with regret and irritation) six felling mill hammers, that with their alternative blows created that same noise” (288). The narrator addresses the reader directly; recognizing that some readers may be just as immersed in the fantasy and fright as Sancho, for those who “do not have it,” or understand what the source is, he explains the realistic interpretation. Sancho is so relieved, that it shows just how believable a fantastical source of the sound is, because his belief originated from reality and his bodily sensations. Sancho’s character, which is rooted physically in real-world needs, such as thirst and needing to go to the bathroom (humorous as it is) is essential to the shifting of his threshold between reality and fantasy, and is originally affected by his external world.

In conclusion, Sancho is represented as connected to the physical world in comparison to Don Quijote, so therefore, it is sensible that his belief must come through a reality he already holds to be authentic. His body acts as a receiver of external stimulations, transforming them within himself and later emitting his reactions—either emotive, physical or both—out into the real world again. This process acts as a validation for Sancho’s belief in fantasy, which is created within him and later forced out into the real world, much like Kafka’s short story and San-

cho's diverting of his demon. Examining when and why Sancho believes in fantasy can illuminate questions about what creates fantasy within the literary world, one whose conduit is the words used to transmit its world into reality.

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# TATE JAMES

Tate James is a junior studying comparative literature and creative writing. She is particularly interested in contemporary Japanese media and culture, especially regarding gender and sexuality. She has been interested in *Revolutionary Girl Utena* since she was given a VHS with four of the series' (age-appropriate) episodes on it when she was eight years old; she discovered the rest of the series in college, and has been interested in analyzing it academically since then.

Mentor: **Anna Kovalchuk**

## EMPTY FLOATING CASTLES: *REVOLUTIONARY GIRL UTENA'S* DECONSTRUCTION OF GENDER PERFORMANCE

**MOST OF US WERE RAISED ON FAIRY TALES.** We were more moved by the boy eaten by wolves than the notion that we should be honest; more deeply motivated by the image of a pig safe inside a house of bricks than real life hard work; and made more optimistic by Cinderella's rags-to-riches story than the plain principle of hope. These tales were clear-cut and easy to digest, and their morals felt real both because of their simplicity and the context that their status as stories gave them. Most importantly, fairy tales are insidious: because everyone knows them and because we were introduced to them so young, they often follow us into adulthood. But what are the consequences of that? Are fairy tale messages really worth holding onto? *Revolutionary Girl Utena* attempts to answer these questions. The show interrogates fairy tale archetypes and the patriarchal narratives they propound through its depiction of Ohtori Academy and the dissonance between its imagined fairy tale identity and the often ineffective and sometimes overtly sinister identity it actually has. When the series' protagonist, Utena, ultimately destroys that system, the show literally and figuratively deconstructs the patriarchal tropes Ohtori represents.

*Revolutionary Girl Utena* consists of thirty-nine admittedly confusing episodes. The entirety of the series takes place at Ohtori Academy; in fact, *Utena* never graces us with a substantial look outside the boarding school's walls. Ohtori is governed by a bizarre system in which student council members don prince-like uniforms and duel each other with swords atop an arena in the sky in order to "bring the world revolution." The winner of these duels becomes "engaged" to the Rose Bride, Anthy Himemiya, who grants him or her several favors. The most practical of these favors is the power to pull the Sword of Dios from her breast during subsequent duels, but Anthy is also forced to both do and be whatever her fiancé wishes. The root of Anthy's role as the Rose Bride is actually much more sinister than it appears to be at first: in order to protect her (sexually abusive) older brother, Akio, from being hurt by angry townspeople, she is, at times metaphorically and at others literally, impaled by the "million shining swords of human hatred." Meanwhile Akio lords over the school as its chairman and secret master of the dueling arena. Unfortunately, however, he is no longer the prince, named Dios, he was when Anthy gave herself up for him. The spirit of his past identity still exists with his old name, a shadow that appears occasionally over the course of the series to grant Utena his princely power.

Utena participates in this ritual unwillingly. She decides to become a prince because she was apparently rescued by one during her childhood, and the ring he gave her—the same one all the duelists wear—marks her as a duelist whether she likes it or not. She is so disgusted by the system in which Anthy is passed around between duelists as an object that she decides to win her herself in order to grant Anthy her freedom. She thus spends the show facing off against a barrage of duelists—and their comments about how unseemly it is for a girl to want to be a prince or wear boy's clothes—in order to simultaneously protect Anthy and pursue her own dream of princehood.

*Revolutionary Girl Utena* is not uninfluenced by genre, nor does it pretend to be. It is, for one thing, a shoujo (literally "girls'") anime: the huge eyes and slender limbs of its characters betray its origin in that tradition. Moreover, shoujo is often influenced by western fairy tales, and *Utena* is no exception. The show is visually immersed in a fairy tale aesthetic and mythos. The first words the viewer hears (or, rather, that English speakers read) are "once upon a time, years and years ago, there was a little princess." Such an opening obviously emulates fairy tales, framing the show as one that is openly involved with them. The opening story itself follows a typical path: once upon a time, there was a princess, and she was rescued

by a prince. The narration is accompanied by barely-animated frames that would look at home in a picture book, solidifying the fairy tale tone. And indeed, *Utena* visually emulates fairy tales through to its end. It is, for one thing, deeply symbolic and fantastical: the show asks the viewer to suspend disbelief when swords are drawn from its characters' chests, when castles float in the sky, and when the ghost of a prince descends from that castle, lifting Utena briefly into the air. Moreover, many of these fantastical themes are recycled as stock footage throughout the series. When Utena draws a sword from Anthy's chest each time they duel, the series copies the repetitive structure of fables. The duels themselves are costumed in Western-style, archetypal chivalry: duelists fight exclusively with swords, dressed in prince-like student council uniforms (with the exception of Utena, who dresses like a prince despite not being a member of the student council), while the Rose Bride watches passively in a princess's dress and tiara. Thus, this repeated sequence is packaged in the most archetypal way possible.

Although *Utena's* whimsical aesthetic appears innocent, the show uses it deliberately in order to interrogate whether or not the fairy tales it imitates are as innocent as they seem. In her book, *Postmodern Fairytales: Gender and Narrative Strategies*, Cristina Bacchilega examines the use of fairy tales as vehicles that convey social norms. She writes, "in modern times, the fairy tale has more often than not been 'instrumentalized' to support bourgeois and/or conservative interests" (Bacchilega 7) and goes on to write that "these narratives continue to play a privileged role in the production of gender" (Bacchilega 10). This notion is central to *Utena's* approach to its genre. In the ritualized world of the duelists, Ohtori rigorously imposes a set of fairy tale-style roles upon its students, all of them dictated by gender: men embody the active role of prince, while women are princesses, brides, and witches. Lines like "in the end, all girls are like the Rose Bride" solidify the sense that these idealized roles are supposedly universally gendered. True to form, the duelists are primarily men, and when they fight for Anthy, they emulate fairy tales in which princes—or men who wish to become princes—participate in contests and duels in order to win a princess' hand in marriage. Anthy's title, the "Rose Bride," emphasizes the connection to those stories. Not only that, but the fact that she is a "bride" suggests that her role is inherently feminine. The relationship between the Rose Bride and those who fight for her exemplifies the male gaze as Laura Mulvey describes it in her essay, "Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema." Mulvey writes, "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze

projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly” (Mulvey 19). As she passively watches the duels, a prize to be won, Anthy inhabits the “passive/female” that Mulvey describes, while the duelists enact the active role of men. The juxtaposition between Anthy’s expressionless, motionless form and the often hyper-expressive, quickly moving duelists underscores the notion that men are active and women are passive.

Ohtori further enforces gender through the clothing its students wear. The duelists’ prince-like uniforms and the Rose Bride’s princess-like dress match the genders of the roles they are assigned to in the most traditional way possible. Moreover, the visual difference between them is stark: the sharp lines and trim figures of the duelists’ uniforms juxtapose Anthy’s round and enormously wide ball gown. This contrast emphasizes Anthy’s passivity and the activeness of the duelists, and is reminiscent of Mulvey’s notion of an appropriately “styled” female figure: Anthy’s dress is not designed for movement, but to be looked at. These norms extend beyond the dueling arena as well. Although most Japanese schools require their students to wear uniforms to classes, the show calls attention to the way these uniforms are gendered in its first few moments. Utena is introduced to the viewer through her interaction with a teacher who reprimands her for wearing a boy’s uniform. Utena quickly proves that it is not technically against the school’s written rules for her to dress this way, but the scene nevertheless draws attention to the unspoken expectation that men and women should dress differently. Moreover, the fact that the norms of the arena bleed into the expectations of daily life suggests that the duels, while literally happening in an arena in the sky, are not inconsequential. Rather, they serve as Ohtori’s own version of a fairy tale: gender is produced within the duels’ exclusive, mythical realm, and people in the real world imitate it.

The characters in the show also impose upon each other a remarkably binary set of gendered imagery. Men are associated with swords, a phallic symbol, and women are associated with roses, a yonic symbol. The most obvious example exists, again, within the dueling arena, as male-coded duelists wield swords and fight for the *Rose* Bride. The genderedness of this symbolism is fully solidified when Utena first arrives at the End of the World: Akio takes the Sword of Dios from her, saying, “Swords don’t really go with dresses, do they?” As has been previously established, dresses are associated with women. The idea, then, that swords don’t “go” with dresses suggests that swords are a masculine symbol. Moreover, the respective yonic- and phallicness of roses and swords, combined with their

firmly gendered associations, implies that gender—according to Ohtori, at least—is wholly tied to sex. The notion that “in the end, all girls are like the Rose Bride,” then, is not only an enforcement of a role, but also a method by which girls’ identities are reduced to their genitalia.

But these symbols and roles are little more than performance, and the show calls attention to the extent to which they are performed. In her essay, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,” Judith Butler writes, “Gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts” (Butler 519). The “stylized repetition” of gendered acts in *Utena* mirrors this notion. The dueling arena serves as an extreme realization of gendered performance. In fact, the arena resembles a stage: its round shape and extreme separation from daily life gives it a stagelike appearance. The fact that the Rose Bride’s and duelists’ uniforms are so gaudily archetypal, in contrast to the more modern school uniforms everyone wears when not dueling, coupled with the fact that they are only worn in the arena, makes them reminiscent of costumes. This furthers the sense that the duels are a form of exaggerated performance. Finally, the changing elements of the arena’s landscape—desks during the “Black Rose” arc and cars during the “Apocalypse Saga”—are reminiscent of props and set pieces, in that they are placed on top of an unchanging stage in order to set a scene. Thus the arena serves as a stage upon which the ritual of gender is acted out. The drama of the arena-as-stage functions, then, almost as a parody of gender. Bacchilega writes: “to break the magic spell [of fairy tales’ influence upon cultural norms], we must learn to recognize it as a spell that can be unmade” (8). By drawing so much attention to the extent to which gender is performed at Ohtori Academy, *Utena* explicitly establishes that that performance is a *spell*, thereby beginning the process of unmaking it.

*Utena* further proves that Ohtori’s gender roles are little but performance by making most of what they are based upon wholly fake. The story of what inspired Utena to become a prince, for instance, is untrue: she did not fall heterosexually in love with a prince, nor was she rescued by one, but she decided to become a prince because it was the only way to save another girl from constant, eternal impalement. Thus the tale that Utena bases her life upon has nothing to do with, in Butler’s words, a “central locus” of heterosexual identity; rather, it is a deeply internalized act. The warped story also suggests that Ohtori is an ultimately ineffective force that can do little but obscure the truth. Perhaps the most damning evidence of all is

the fact that much of Ohtori's fairy tale aesthetic is actually only a projection. Neither the dueling arena nor the upside-down castle in the sky really exist, meaning that what the duelists have so staunchly devoted themselves to over the course of thirty-nine episodes was hollow. The roles they acted out did nothing but preserve Akio's status as an all-knowing, all-powerful leader. And because Ohtori's design is so deeply rooted in patriarchal, heteronormative fairy tales, the fact that so much of that narrative is literally a hologram suggests that the patriarchy itself is little more than a mere representation, constructing a narrative that is only useful to a specific few. The roles it forces people into are not as innate as its proponents would have one believe, and there is no reward for fulfilling them.

But Ohtori is not wholly a failure. Occasionally, it succeeds, but these successes are deeply sinister beneath the surface. Anthy's role as Rose Bride and witch is genuinely real. Moreover, the fact that she is constantly being impaled by swords, whether metaphorical or literal, indicates an immense amount of suffering. Since, as Akio says, "tak[ing] the swords in place of the prince" is the "destiny of the Rose Bride," her pain is directly tied to the fairy tale role imposed upon her. Moreover, the fact that she takes the swords so that the prince doesn't have to directly implicates him in her suffering. Akio—ruler of Ohtori and, by extension, a representative of those who benefit from the patriarchy in general—benefits from her discomfort, as he remains in power because of it. Anthy's relationship with the swords is reminiscent of the "sadistic voyeurism" (22) that Mulvey describes. The fact that Anthy is impaled by one *million* swords implicates men and masculinity as a whole. As has been previously established, the show strongly associates swords with men. By connecting masculine imagery to Anthy's suffering, *Utena* suggests that traditional masculinity actively hurts women. Ohtori's fairy tale narrative, then, is both hollow *and* damaging.

Because the roles Ohtori is preoccupied with are so harmful, no meaningful revolution can come from playing by the rules. The school's obsession with "revolution" becomes ironic: just what is revolutionary about enforcing the same tired, centuries-old gender roles? The fact that no one is ever clear about just what he means by revolution also calls the duels' revolutionariness into question. This preoccupation with revolution, however meaningless it might be, establishes the school as a place sick with stagnation. It must change, and the only question is how.

Utena emerges as a character perfectly suited to destabilize and eventually destroy everything Ohtori stands for. Although she is often blinded by the insidi-

ousness of Ohtori's patriarchal narrative, she is also its antithesis: she enacts both male and female roles, refusing to bend to one side or another. The most obvious way in which she refuses to conform is her desire to become a prince. She also plays basketball on a team that is otherwise entirely composed of boys; girls fawn over whenever she walks by, a shoujo trope that is traditionally reserved for men; and her most lasting love interest is a woman. She also consistently refers to herself with *boku*, the Japanese masculine word for "I" and "me," rather than the more neutral *watashi*, or feminine *atashi*. At the same time, she identifies herself as a girl throughout the series, freely mixing masculine and feminine markers. When one of her classmates asks her to permanently join his basketball team, she indignantly responds with "Excuse me, I happen to be a girl!" She expresses a similar sentiment repeatedly throughout the series with varying levels of anxiety and earnestness.

As we have seen, one of the primary methods by which Ohtori enforces gender is through clothing. Utena, however, is rarely depicted in anything but a boy's uniform. Moments when she does wear more traditionally feminine clothing mark periods of depression and a loss of self; these moments never last longer than a single episode. Toward the beginning of the series, when Utena loses a duel for the first time, she dons a girl's uniform because it is "normal." Wakaba says, "that uniform just isn't right for you," insisting, "Not being normal is normal for you! This sort of normal isn't *your* sort of normal!" Wakaba's voice disappears later on in the series when Utena wears clothing that is unusual for her, but because this interaction happens the first time she wears girl's clothes, it colors the way the viewer perceives these moments throughout the rest of the series. Wakaba's insistence upon the notion that Utena is being untrue to herself by wearing boy's clothes suggests that something much deeper than appearance is tied to them. Utena is not, inherently, normal, and in a world where "normal" is a rigid allocation of gendered roles, that unusualness alludes to the fact that Utena—and, perhaps, that gender—exist outside of that space. Furthermore, with pink hair and large eyes, she is aesthetically feminine at the same time as she is masculine. Her duelist uniform is actually more feminine than her school uniform, or even the uniforms of the other female duelists; ruffles and shoes with bows on them are offset by a military-style jacket, complete with epaulettes. Since, as has been previously established, what Utena wears is so meaningful to who she is as a person, an outfit that is equal parts masculine and feminine suggests that her identity straddles the line between male and female. She is neither one nor the other, an outsider in a world polarized by gender. Moreover, because society's conception of gender relies so heavily upon

its performance, it is easy to subvert those conceptions merely by performing unusually. Butler refers to the possibility of “the breaking or subversive repetition of [traditionally gendered] style[s]” (Butler 520). What Utena wears is subversive: by breaking the rules, she lays the foolishness of those rules bare.

When Utena rejects the role of prince in the final moments of the series and destroys Ohtori’s imagined world, she completes her deconstructive arc. What happens at the End of the World clearly demonstrates the difference between Utena and Akio, the only actual prince the series has ever seen. When Anthy stabs Utena, saying, “you can never be my prince. Because you’re a girl,” she brings Utena’s unique middleness to the forefront in two ways. The first is the obvious statement that she is a girl; the second is that the impalement forces her to do something that is simply impossible for Ohtorian princes. If the role of the Rose Bride is to absorb wounds for her prince, Utena accepting the blow *herself* irrevocably separates her from princehood. Utena and Akio perhaps most strongly diverge from each other in their attitudes toward Anthy. Whereas Akio sees Anthy as nothing but a useful, passive body, Utena genuinely loves her. Love is completely at odds with what Ohtori has demonstrated the relationship between the Rose Bride and her prince should be: Akio’s willingness to let her be impaled by swords meant for him proves that. This difference is starkly illustrated when the two watch even more swords fly at Anthy. While Akio calmly remarks upon the inevitability of Anthy’s fate, Utena gasps in pain as if she is being stabbed alongside Anthy. When she stands up despite being wounded and opens the Rose Gate, she sharply juxtaposes herself against the Dios that lay helpless the first time Anthy sacrificed herself for him. The contrast between Utena’s empathy and Akio’s cold disinterest emphasizes the fact that the two are, at their cores, totally unlike. Thus Utena is not and cannot become a prince; rather, she must become something less burdened by patriarchal toxicity.

It is this rejection of princehood that gives Utena the power to liberate Anthy and destroy the dueling arena completely. When she opens the Rose Gate with a tear, it becomes clear that “revolutionizing the world” is dependent upon genuine love. Akio cannot open the gate because he does not truly care about Anthy and never would have wept for her. The fact that the gate must be opened with a tear undermines the callous patriarchal rules that Ohtori represents, as well as illustrates the harshness of a world in which Anthy has only ever been used and never truly loved. When the gate is opened, Anthy falls away and the arena disintegrates. Utena thinks she has failed, saying, “I guess in the end... I couldn’t be a prince.”



What even she does not realize, however, is that not being a prince was instrumental to her victory: only as an outsider was she able to break the cycle of suffering to which Anthy had been bound. By making this victory so dependent upon the rejection of the role of prince, a role that she never would have been able to reject had she not been a character so quintessentially caught between thresholds, *Revolutionary Girl Utena* argues for dismantling patriarchal narratives wholesale.

As charming as fairy tales often are, it is easy to grow tired of them. They are, for one thing, repetitive: women only ever fall in love with men, slipping neatly into the same roles each time. These tired stories are boring at best and genuinely damaging at worst, and they only benefit a select few heterosexual men. We need new stories. *Revolutionary Girl Utena* argues for the importance of fresher narratives by demonstrating the damaging effects of the ones we already have. Moreover, the show's message is destructive; it suggests that we do away with patriarchal narratives altogether. But if we do that, what will we have left? The answer is almost nothing. It is important—vital, even—that we create vibrant, healthy stories to fill in the space the old ones would leave behind.

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# BRIAUNA JONES

Briauna Jones is a third year Spanish and Comparative Literature double major at the Clark Honors College. Her intellectual interests include Spanish poetry and prose, the study of the aesthetics and appreciation of our natural world, and the history of Latin America. She is the Vice President of Leadership Development for the international coed service fraternity Alpha Phi Omega, as well as a Mentor Resident Assistant for University Housing, and the mother to many plants and flowers.

Mentor: **Justine Parkin**

## THE THRESHOLD OF THE SUBLIME: STANDING IN AWE AND FEAR IN JOSÉ MARÍA HEREDIA'S "EN EL TEOCALLI DE CHOLULA"

NATURE PROVIDES, SUSTAINS, AND PREDICTS how we as humans will live. There are unexpected and certain times where nature is stunning. Capturing and recounting these moments is near impossible, though some artists and writers are able to do it. The German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich exposes sublime elements of nature in his landscape paintings, especially the well-known work "Wanderer above the Sea of Fog." Similarly, José María Heredia is a poet who attempts to recreate the indescribable experience of nature. In this paper, I will draw from Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant's concepts of the sublime from their 18th century texts along with eco-critical arguments that Allen Carlson and Noël Carroll provide in their contemporary texts in my reading of José María Heredia's prose poem "En el Teocalli de Cholula." I will argue that María Heredia engages with the sublime by presenting a simultaneous awe and fear of nature. Furthermore, readers will agree that if they were to stand and look onto el Teocalli de Cholula, they too would be in the presence of the sublime.

Cuban-born José María Heredia (1803–1839) died young and full of passion. After the Cuban government exiled him from the country in 1823 because of an alleged plot against Spain's colonial government, María Heredia spent the rest of his short life living and working in Mexico and America (Glover 78). María Heredia's works fall into the Romantic era of South American literature because of their distinctive tropes, which Glover explains include "the exaltation of passion over reason, a fascination with ruins, the importance of nature, [and] the preeminence of the individual ego" (78). María Heredia published "En el Teocalli de Cholula" in 1822. The Náhuatl definition of teocalli is "house of a god" ("teocalli"). Teocalli is defined as a temple for the ancestors of the Nahuatl people, which is located geographically in modern-day Mexico and El Salvador ("teocalli"). Surrounded by large volcanoes, Cholula is a town in the state of Puebla, Mexico. A great volcanic range surrounds both the temple and the town of Cholula; the temple, a man-made object, literally sits in nature. Both the human history of the temple and the title of the poem, "On the Teocalli of Cholula," emphasize the interaction between nature and humankind.

Before delving into the sublime experience in a text, we must establish a clear definition of the sublime. For this definition, we turn to two 18th century philosophers, Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. Burke makes the distinction between the beautiful and the sublime and Kant expands Burke's definition and explores different occurrences of the sublime. In his 1757 work *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Burke defines the difference between the beautiful and the sublime. Burke argues that experiencing both the beautiful and the sublime come from the feelings of pain and pleasure. Throughout his work, Burke associates beauty with love "or some passion similar to it" and the sublime with danger (162). Burke discusses how pain and pleasure can both have positive effects: "pain and pleasure, in their most simple and natural manner of affecting, are each of positive nature, and by no means necessarily dependent on each other for their existence" (44). Of course, the sublime is not an experience of pure and extreme pain; rather, it is an encounter with something just near that (60). The merely beautiful and sublime are different. Burke defines the sublime as "whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime, that is it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling" (58–9).

We see the pain and the pleasure of the sublime in "En el Teocalli de Cholula"

la” as the narrator experiences it. Stanza five provides a source of the narrator’s familiarity with the sublime. María Heredia writes:

con lentitud la sombra se extendía  
del Popocatepec, y semejaba  
fantasma colosal. El arco oscuro  
a mí llegó, cubriome, y su grandeza  
fue mayor y mayor, hasta que al cabo  
en sombra universal veló la tierra. (68–73)

the shadow from Popcatépetl slowly  
reached out and spread forth resembling  
a colossal phantasm. The shaded arc  
finally touched me, covering me,  
its grandeur grew and grew until at last  
it veiled the earth in its cosmic shade.

The narrator feels excitement when the black shadow of the volcano covers him. The volcano is too sublime for him to look away.

In his 1764 work *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, Kant works with the juxtaposition of the beautiful and the sublime; Kant argues that one must feel beauty to feel the sublime and must know the sublime to know beauty. Kant elaborates upon Burke’s definition of the sublime by articulating how the sublime and the beautiful need each other to exist. While Burke shows the beautiful and the sublime as distinct, for Kant, the beautiful and the sublime entail one another. Kant gives examples of what the sublime is and what the beautiful is:

The finer feeling that we will now consider is preeminently of two kinds: the feeling of the sublime and of the beautiful. Being touched by either is agreeable, but in very different ways. The sight of a mountain whose snow-covered peaks arise about the clouds, the description of a raging storm, or the depiction of the kingdom of hell by Milton arouses satisfaction, but with dread; by contrast, the prospect of meadows strewn with flowers, of valleys with winding brooks, covered with grazing herds, the description of Elysium, or Homer’s depiction of the girdle of Venus also occasion an agreeable sentiment, but one that is joyful and smiling. (14-6)

In short, “the night is sublime, the day is beautiful” (16). Kant even separates the sublime into three distinct categories: the terrifying, which is “accompanied with

some dread or even melancholy”; the noble, “quiet admiration”; and the magnificent—“beauty spread over a sublime prospect” (16).

“En el Teocalli de Cholula” represents Kant’s definition of the sublime with the narrator’s continued description of Popocatepetl in stanza five. The narrator knows and expresses that he is in the presence of the sublime; as Kant describes, “the sublime must always be large” whereas the beautiful is usually small (17). María Heredia writes, “Volví los ojos al volcán sublime,/que velado en vapores transparentes,/sus inmensos contornos dibujada/de occidente en el cielo” (“I turned my eyes to the sublime volcano,/which, visible through a foggy curtain/in the western sky, was outlining/the contours of its immense design”) (74–7).

Published in 1822, “En el Teocalli de Cholula” is a close contemporary piece to both 18th century texts from the Western philosophers Burke and Kant. In his prose poem, José María Heredia employs an ebb and flow pattern between magnificent and hostile descriptions, correlating to the awe and fear of nature; this pattern distinguishes the simply beautiful from the sublime. This characteristic factor showcases the interplay between the beautiful and the sublime and the emotion that is a result, as Kant suggests. The give and take relationship between humans and nature that María Heredia forms suggests whomever views el Teocalli de Cholula will be in the presence of the sublime.

The second half of the first stanza begins to show the ebb and flow pattern that María Heredia employs in “En el Teocalli de Cholula.” This passage provides both outstanding and intimidating imagery. This first passage illuminates the distinction between humans and nature with the descriptions of the “Indian” and “Nature” with a capital N. María Heredia introduces the Indian by writing, “Los mira el indio en púrpura ligera” (“the Indian/happily watches them turn to hues/of light purple and gold”) (16–8). Though the English translation capitalizes the word “Indian” and some readers may find this of significance, the reason that this happens is simply because of translation. In English, words for naming a certain set of people—such as the Native Americans or Indians—are capitalized; this is not done in the Spanish language and in the original version it is written “el indio” (16). However, the English translation also capitalizes the word “Nature” (Spanish: la naturaleza). María Heredia writes that the sun “y vio a naturaleza conmovida/con su dulce calor hervir en vida” (“saw Nature deeply moved and stirred/to teeming life by its sweetly gentle heat”) (22–3). This is an unusual capitalization in the English translation, and because it is in the first stanza, it draws attention to the natural element that will exist throughout the poem. By contrasting the Indian

with Nature, María Heredia creates two distinct camps that each of his carefully selected words will fall into: humans and nature. These two ideas are not opposing; they are different yet intertwined, just as Kant would describe the beautiful and the sublime.

The descriptions that describe the awe of nature in this first passage allude to a metaphoric young virgin queen. Through specific word choice in his description of the volcanoes, the fields, and the sun, María Heredia executes this extended metaphor. First, María Heredia writes about the mountains: “Nieve eternal corona las cabezas/de Iztaccíhuatl purísimo, Orizaba/y Popocatépetl” (“Eternal snows crown the heads/of purest Iztacihuatl, Orizaba/and Popocatépetl”) (12–4). Here, María Heredia uses the words “crowned” and “purest” which both suggest that the volcanoes, representatives of nature, are royal and untainted. Then, María Heredia refers to the fields as “fertilísimos” (16) (“fertile”) and “en púrpura ligera/y oro teñirse” (“[turning] to hues/of light purple and gold”) (16–8). “Fertile” shows that, in addition to being pure, nature is also able to produce an heir just as a queen can produce another ruler for an empire. “[Turning] to hues/of light purple and gold” creates an image in readers’ minds of all of the jewelry that queens wear and this imagery of excessive wealth further inspires awe for the fields that are fertile and tinted gold. Finally, María Heredia writes that the sun pours out its golden light (“Del sol en occidente... vertió su luz dorada” [19–21]) from the sky. This is another use of metaphoric language that alludes to royalty: the rays of the sun, golden and pouring out across the land, look very similar to a crown worn by a queen. The metaphoric language and allusion show the awe of nature and that nature is a being that encompasses everything humans could need.

On the other hand, hostile imagery appears in this passage with repetition and metaphor. First, the repetition of “eternal” snow and ice, appearing in the beginning and end of the passage, creates a cold and undesirable feeling towards nature. María Heredia writes “Nieve eternal corona las cabezas/de Iztaccíhuatl purísimo, Orizaba/y Popocatepetl, sin que el invierno” (“Eternal snow crowns the heads of” three famous volcanoes: Iztaccíhuatl, Orizaba, and Popocatepetl”) (12–4). The mountains are cold and unwelcoming to visitors because even during spring, summer, and fall, there is snow in sight and the visitors can feel the chilly weather. The repetition continues when María Heredia writes that the western sun pours its golden light onto “eternal ice” (“Del sol en occidente, que sereno/en hielo eterno y perennal verdura/a torrentes vertió su luz dorada” [19–21]). The contrast between the sun and the eternal ice creates the unfriendly imagery; the sun has

golden light, but shines only onto ice. The eternal snow and ice produce a hostile environment and very few people can survive in this location. The repetition of the word “eternal” also creates some kind of fear or anxiety as it is constantly having attention drawn to it; this only adds to the pain that might feel in the presence of el Teocalli de Cholula. The beautiful and the dangerous work together and recall Kant’s concept of the terrifying sublime.

María Heredia also alludes the force of winter to a higher power. After his description of the volcanoes, María Heredia writes that “sin que el invierno/toque jamás con destructora mano/los campos fertilísimos” (“winter,/with its destructive hands, never touches/their [the mountains’] extremely fertile fields”) (14–6). This excerpt shows the sublime by contrasting the beautiful volcanoes and fields with winter’s “destructive hands.” Volcanoes themselves are sublime as they are gorgeous to view and make for a great hike, but they also have the capacity to kill both humans and nature when they explode. Winter instills fear as it watches with its destructive hands, but the volcanoes invoke beauty because of the “extremely fertile fields” that grow on their sides.

The third stanza introduces the first-person narrator who can be seen as an opposing figure or foil to el Teocalli de Cholula, which makes the relationship between humans and nature all the more apparent. Without the first-person narrator, there would be nothing sublime about this poem: without a human history within and human perspective of nature, the natural element cannot be sublime. The third stanza begins “Hallábame sentado en la famosa/Choloteca pirámide. Tendido/el llano inmenso que ante mí yacía,/los ojos a esparciarse convidaba” (“I found myself sitting atop the famous/pyramid of Cholula. Stretching out/at my feet was the vast unmatched plain/inviting my eyes to a sumptuous feast”) (42–5). The narrator seems to be a foil to the el Teocalli de Cholula because he is the human among nature; the sublime place has immersed him.

In addition to the first-person narrator, the immediate juxtaposition of the beautiful fields and the events that occurred in these fields in the third stanza of “En el Teocalli de Cholula” reflect a turning point in the poem. The fields directly correlate to the ebb and flow pattern María Heredia uses throughout his poem and this juxtaposition demonstrates that it takes both humans and nature to create a sublime interaction. The cornfields in this section represent the magnificence of nature. María Heredia refers to these fields in the third stanza as “bellos campos” (“beautiful fields”) (48). It is important that nature itself is what highlights the positive aspect of this stanza because it sets the stage for this land to be sublime.

Furthermore, the actions taken on this land instill the fear that creates a sublime experience. Without this fear and feelings of melancholy, the fields and el Teocalli de Cholula would be solely beautiful. These hostile descriptions are found in immediate juxtaposition to the description of the lovely fields and make three appearances: “barbarous oppression,” “blood of men,” and the inundation of “ancient superstition and by war” (47–51). First, María Heredia writes that it was in the fields where “reina alzada/la bárbara opresión” (“barbarous oppression once reigned”) (47–8). The contrast between the beautiful fields and the negative events that occurred there speaks directly to the awe and fear of nature; these fields provide both a striking place to view nature and an open space where oppression can rise up and rule. Additionally, these rich cornfields were manured “Con sangre de hombres” (“by human blood”) (49–50). In order for the people to have something beautiful, such as the cornfields, they must pay for it with something awful, such as the bloodshed of fellow man. The war that María Heredia speaks of may be representative of the colonization of South America by the Spanish and Portuguese. Because the Cuban government exiled María Heredia from Cuba, he may have felt empathy with the native people who built el Teocalli de Cholula and represent it in a sublime light.

Now that we know if one is in the presence of el Teocalli de Cholula, one is experiencing a sublime place, we must consider how one can appreciate the nature that provides so much for us as humans. For this we turn to two contemporary authors, Allen Carlson and Noël Carroll. Carlson writes about three models of appreciation that viewers apply to nature and Carroll builds on Carlson’s work by attaching emotion to appreciation. In his work “Appreciation and the Natural Environment,” Carlson discusses how to appreciate the nature that surrounds humans. Carlson presents three ways (models) of appreciation: object, landscape/scenery, and environmental; ultimately he argues that the environmental model is the most effective way of appreciating nature. Carlson offers these models of appreciation because traditional modes of appreciation as applied to “art cannot be applied to the natural environment without at least some modification” (268). The object model of appreciation, for Carlson, applies to objects which are “self-contained aesthetic units” such as such as sculpture (268). Eventually, Carlson concludes that the object model is not an acceptable way of appreciating nature because “in either case [removed object or not] the object model does not provide a successful paradigm for the aesthetic appreciation of nature” (269). The next model that Carlson discusses is the landscape, or scenery, model which landscape



painting exemplifies. In this model, “when aesthetically appreciating landscape paintings [...] the representation of the object and its represented features” is the focus (270). Yet, Carlson once again concludes that this model is an inappropriate manner in which to appreciate nature given that the landscape “model requires the appreciation of the environment not as what it is and with the qualities it has, but rather as something it is not and with qualities it does not have” (271). The third, and preferred, way of appreciating nature is Carlson’s environmental model. Carlson defines the environment as “the setting in which we exist as a ‘sentient part’; it is our surroundings [...] If any one part of it becomes obtrusive, it is in danger of being seen as an object or a scene, not as our environment” (271). Carlson decides that this model is the way to appreciate nature and we must do so by “[experiencing] our background setting in all those ways in which we normally experience it, by sight, smell, touch, and whatever. However, we must experience not as unobtrusive background, but as obtrusive foreground!” (272).

Carlson’s environmental model of appreciation reflects the narrator’s perspective in María Heredia’s poem and allows modern readers to relate to “En el Teocalli de Cholula.” We find that the narrator uses the environmental model to appreciate el Teocalli de Cholula because he takes in the entire setting from a high vantage point where “el llano inmenso que ante mí yacía,/los ojos a espaciarse convidaba” (“a vast unmatched plain/invit[ed his] eyes to a sumptuous feast”) (44–5). The narrator takes in the plains as a whole and sees them as an obtrusive foreground.

In his chapter “On Being Moved by Nature: Between Religion and Natural History” from his work *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays*, Carroll proposes a refined way to appreciate nature. Carroll’s main focus is the emotional connection that humans have with nature in order to appreciate it. Carroll writes that the “emotions aroused by nature that concern me can be fully secular and have no call to be demystified as displaced religious sentiment. That is, being moved by nature is a mode of nature appreciation that is available between science and religion” (370). Where Carlson tries to secularize the appreciation of nature, because emotion puts too much emphasis on the object and landscape models, Carroll knows the importance of the emotion in appreciation. Carroll sees the significance of the environmental model, but one must have emotions and feelings towards the environment one is viewing to appreciate it.

The first-person narration in “En el Teocalli de Cholula” demonstrates human arousal of emotion that Carroll argues cannot be forgotten when we appreci-

ate the nature that surrounds us. By immersing the reader in the surroundings of the fields, María Heredia accentuates the environmental model of appreciation that Carlson advocates. The poem distinguishes between the beautiful and sublime in the manner of Kant. Even though Friedrich and María Heredia were contemporaries, they represent the sublime in radically different ways. Friedrich paints in a manner traditional to the Enlightenment period where the sublime excites feelings of danger, and the landscape model confines the sublime, just as the frame confines the painting itself. María Heredia builds past the Enlightenment, and even the Romantic, period ideas of the sublime and composes a piece that allows even present-day readers to contemplate their appreciation of and therefore their relationship to nature. Readers must have an emotional appreciation for nature as it will be nature that governs how we will continue to live on this earth.

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# ANNIE DE LANCIE

Annie De Lancie is a senior Biological Anthropology major from San Francisco, CA. She attended an all girls middle and high school, which ignited an interest in feminine literature and theory which has stayed with her until today. After reading Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in a Comparative Literature class and watching *The Sopranos* Annie became interested in the television series as a unique take on the mob narrative with its inclusion of feminine rhetoric.

Mentor: **Tera Reid-Olds**

## SOPRANO THRESHOLDS

**VISUAL MEDIA ENABLES AN ESCAPE FROM REALITY**, crossing a threshold into an untold world. Through the camera lens, film and television makers invite audiences to engage emotionally in on-screen experiences. Laura Mulvey writes in her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" that "conditions of screening and narrative conventions give the spectator an illusion of looking in on a private world" (60). One of the most private of worlds, the Italian-American Mafia, is frequently exposed through filmmakers' renditions of La Cosa Nostra's malicious criminal activity. Crossing into television, the archetypal Mafioso is transformed. In *The Sopranos* (1999–2007), directed by David Chase and aired on HBO, the subversion of the mob trope—from male dominated and action oriented cinema to a more intimate and dynamic television series—is enabled through Dr. Jennifer Melfi's (Lorraine Bracco) psychiatry with Tony Soprano (James Gandolfini).

Chase's choice in crossing the threshold into television redefines the audience's perception of the mob. Viewers can experience the television series in the privacy of their own home which creates an intimacy between spectator and spectacle, as "relocation from film to TV enables a move from Hollywood's action-man mode of a diagesis-controlling hero/anti-hero to the more intimate relations of TV" (Staines 169). Viewers are introduced to an original representation of organized

crime detailed in Tony's conscious and unconscious thought through his therapy sessions with Dr. Melfi. As Deborah Staines writes, "Serialized television drama enables a complex layering and point-counterpoint of narrative, across the duration of a broadcast season—just as the practice of analytical therapy can reveal and locate an individual's experience of episodic depression within the context of a lifetime" (170). Tony Soprano is stripped of his title and responsibilities of a La Cosa Nostra capo, exposing a vulnerable and emotional man whom only Dr. Melfi and the viewer are privileged to meet.

The photo advertisement (see Fig.1) of *The Sopranos* gives the viewer and any stranger to the series a clue to the intricate dynamic of those involved in Tony Soprano's life.



FIGURE 1

Tony is placed in the center of the frame facing away from his immediate family and his familial business associates, who are looking around, none directly at Tony. Sitting comfortably inside, he occupies a significant portion of the shot, while the rest of the cast is staged outside, scaled down significantly. His brooding gaze disregards the aggregate attention of the gazes of his entourage behind as he faces forward, staring straight at the camera, meeting the viewer's eye. Therefore the viewer holds the only perspective that encompasses all characters in its scope, including those outside, who are operating separate from Tony, and Dr. Melfi, positioned within the threshold of the home.

Dr. Melfi, neither a member of the family nor the mob, falls between the inside of the home, symbolic of Tony's internal thoughts, and those outside. Dr. Melfi is pictured in a pane of an open glass door leading into the home, watchfully gazing down at Tony. Almost a ghost or godlike symbol in this reflective image, she is not a full physical figure in the frame, yet is purposefully placed nearest to Tony within the home and threshold of his mind. Dr. Melfi's representation in this still reflects the unique role she occupies in Tony's life as the only person allowed access to his guarded psyche. It is crucial to Dr. Melfi's reading of and relationship with Tony that she has an understanding of the nuances Tony exposes in his retelling of his day-to-day life: "Melfi can appreciate Tony's conflicts and function accordingly as a kind of priest, a figure who does have cultural authority" (Plourde 71).

Dr. Melfi and Carmela Soprano (Edie Falco), Tony's wife, are positioned nearly opposite one another in the still captured in the advertisement photograph, with Carmela outside and Dr. Melfi's face acting as Carmela's reflection in the glass. This parallelism between the two main females in Tony's life is symbolic of Carmela's role as the physical and outward counterpart, and Dr. Melfi's emotional and internal support. Dr. Melfi warrants placement inside the open glass doors of the home and physically closest to Tony in the photo due to her unique role as his primary emotional confidant. Dr. Melfi and Carmela provide separate, and at times oppositional, advice and comfort for Tony. Within the home, Carmela and Tony's interactions revolve around the exteriority, while Dr. Melfi delves into Tony's interiority.

More broadly, Dr. Melfi is juxtaposed to all other females in the series as well as historical roles for women in visual narratives because "traditionally the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator...with a shifting tension between the looks on either side of the screen" (Mulvey 62). Nearly all other females in *The Sopranos* fit this erotic objectification: the countless topless dancers at the Bada Bing, Adriana La Cerva (Drea de Matteo), Tony and the crew's many "goomahs", and so on. These women are used exactly as Mulvey describes, as enticing spectacles for both the gaze of the males in the show and the masculine gaze of those viewing from home. The passive role given to women previously allows them little agency in plot development, as "the presence of woman is an indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation. This alien presence then has to be integrated

into cohesion with the narrative” (Mulvey 62). Dr. Melfi contrasts the overtly sexualized women of the Bada Bing who are captured in “moments of erotic contemplation”, by her direct and forceful denial of Tony’s sexual interest and her overall professional demeanor. She is distinct from the Soprano women as well, who are defined primarily by their relation to Tony, acting within his scope, while she is defined independently from Tony as an educated clinician, mother, ex-wife, and friend. Functioning in separate realms with no connection to Tony or the Mafia, she carries out her own sub-plot lines, which includes insight into her therapy as a patient under her own psychiatrist, Dr. Elliot Kupferberg (Peter Bogdonavich). The character of Dr. Melfi is distinguished from other women in the series as well as previous representations of femininity in mob popular culture.

Dr. Melfi’s office is the crux of the series. Chase even entertained the idea of developing the entire narrative through this one physical setting (Plourde 70). Operating within the fixed internal space of her office, the interchange and relationship between Tony and Dr. Melfi is generally undisturbed by intruding or conflicting characters or forces outside this enclosure. Franco Ricci writes in *The Sopranos: Born Under A Bad Sign*, “In this inner haven of silent, painful meditation and prescribed medication, the exterior world falls silent, receding from immediate comprehension yet ever dangerous and beckoning” (Ricci 42). Dr. Melfi’s office is only shown to the viewer from the inside, never depicting Tony entering the building from the street, so the viewer is only privy to the interactions between Dr. Melfi and Tony that occur within this semi-abstract setting. In the office, “the absences of corners and shadowed recesses privilege openness and honesty, qualities alien to the secretive duality of Tony’s normal surroundings” (Ricci 43). Her office provides an arena for Tony to detach from the expectations of his literal world. Relieved of his responsibilities and relationships, he is able freely to explore the origins of his internal distress under therapeutic guidance.

The exchanges within this room and Tony’s role as a patient stand opposed not only to the various other dominant roles he occupies in his public and private life, but also to the archetypical depiction of a Mafia capo. Dr. Melfi is the only person to whom Tony is submissive; she is in control in every way over their relationship, subverting the active/male and passive/female roles of mainstream cinema and, in particular the typically hyper-masculine and aggressive role of a male in mob narratives. Within her office, Dr. Melfi is anything but passive, challenging and interrogating Tony, not only integrating her feminine reading into the narrative, which, as Mulvey posits is a necessity for a strong female role, but also driving

the series forward. She is the most constant support for Tony, meeting with him every single episode of the six season series, even after Carmela and the children kick him out of his own home.

Dr. Melfi continuously reminds Tony and the viewer of her power over him: Tony pays *her* for his visits, she invites him into *her* office, *she* diagnoses and advises Tony on mental recovery. In this realm, completely separate from La Cosa Nostra, without the use of force upon which he usually relies, Tony is forced to function as just a patient, abiding by the practitioner/client protocol Dr. Melfi mandates. Although portraying a gang leader through a psychiatric construct is foreign to popular culture, it can be credited for *The Sopranos*' success. As Ricci observes "the series is premised upon Tony Soprano walking into a therapist's office. Therapy implies the scrutiny of self [and] everything grows from this central image of Tony as a patient, as a primary viewer of himself and the corollary of becoming an object of the viewer's gaze" (Ricci 66). Dr. Melfi, therefore, and subsequently the viewer, become the most apt readers of Tony's narrative, with the bonus of his self-scrutiny exposed only within the therapy sessions. Dr. Melfi even dons reading glasses only during her sessions with Tony, which solidifies her position as a reader (Plourde 72).

An exemplary scene where the viewer sees the nuances of their therapeutic relationship airs early in the series in Season II, Episode 5 "Big Girls Don't Cry" (2000). The therapy session at hand comes after Dr. Melfi questions dropping Tony as a patient due to his ties to the Mafia, exemplifying her power over the pure existence of their relationship as well as her knowledge of Tony's criminal activity. From the start, she is in control, standing above him to invite him in from the waiting room. At 5'8", she is shot from below to appear larger and more domineering than Gandolfini's 6'0" stature, towering over him as he sits below her, reinforcing her active dominance over Tony as he assumes the passive role during their sessions. The purposeful choice to depict Bracco as a desexualized woman, by dressing her demurely and seating her in a conservative position wearing glasses and understated accessories, and with little attention to her hair or makeup, undermines Tony's sexual objectification of her. Unlike his interactions with anyone else, where he usually dictates with whom and when he will converse, Tony is passive while Dr. Melfi sets the tone, agenda, and pace of their sessions. Once they are seated opposite one another, shot at the same sitting height to level out their frames, she does not wait to be spoken to. She begins:

Dr. Melfi: Anthony, what is it you want to achieve here?

Tony: I wanna stop passing out. I want to stop fucking panicking. I want to direct my power and my fucking anger against the people in my life that deserve it. I want to be in total control.

Dr. Melfi: There's no such thing as total control.

Tony: Course there is.

Dr. Melfi: You want to be a better gang leader? Read *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu.

Tony: You know what? Fuck You. You know who I am. You know what I do. You called me. ("Big Girls Don't Cry")

Her tone is direct and inquisitive, and she is not afraid of diving into a personal dialogue with Tony. She even calls him "Anthony", in an almost maternal manner, contrasting the more casual tone used to speak to Tony by the rest of the characters. Although this degree of communication is characteristic and necessary in a therapeutic setting, it is the only forum where Tony is addressed in such a formal manner. This dialogue reveals not only the ease with which Dr. Melfi converses with Tony and her confidence in calling him on his false ideals of control, but also his recognition of Dr. Melfi's power over him. The title "Big Girls Don't Cry" suggests the gender relations pertinent to this episode specifically, and more generally, the series as a whole. As Ricci explains:

One of the most innovative and provocative aspects of *The Sopranos* is undoubtedly the introduction of the feminine principle into the encrypted and closed masculine world of the mob. The Mafia is by definition a secret society that has historically not only excluded the feminine principle but has, in its efforts to remain undiluted and masculine, violently negated anything remotely reminiscent of the weak, passive, and unsightly feminine attributes. (Ricci 121).

Tony is situated in a passive position, which the viewer observes through the maternal coaxing Dr. Melfi provides. Dr. Melfi's superiority and voice force Tony to respect a woman's boundaries, recognizing her as an active character and subverting the stereotypical interactions between a capo and a woman. This subversion reflects Mulvey's instruction that the integration of a feminine rhetoric into outdated mainstream Hollywood works is a necessity in creating a challenging and



successful alternative form of visual expression (59), which Chase does so well.

Dr. Melfi asserts her dominance in their relationship by rejecting Tony's sexual advances, a tactic he uses on numerous women in the series. Dr. Melfi fantasizes about the potential between them, illustrated in scenes where she dreams of having sexual relations with Tony. Following one of these sex dreams, in Season V, Episode 1, "Two Tonys", Tony and Dr. Melfi meet for a session. She welcomes him into her office and again, she speaks first:

Dr. Melfi: So?

Tony: Look, the real reason I'm here is to confront you, in a positive way about takin' our relationship in that other direction.

Dr. Melfi: Why did you have to be underhanded? I don't find that appealing frankly.

Tony: Look I was thinking about all kinds of moves. By her a piece of jewelry, pay the guy to close down the restaurant where she eats lunch and hire a mandolin player. This is the place where we've been most honest with each other and that's the way I always liked it. So that being said, if you don't like me personally or the cut of my jib or my face or whatever then the matter will end here and I will never ask you again. You can be honest.

Dr. Melfi: I like you Anthony. And no, you have a very nice face.

Tony: I've been working on the weight too by the way.

Dr. Melfi: Good. Explain to me okay, why this is a matter of such importance to you. There must be plenty of women out there. ("Two Tonys")

She wastes no time in her interaction with him, using a strong voice to convey her emotions with striking honesty, to which Tony is not familiar. Tony even says, "you can be honest" and "we've been most honest", signaling his comfort with and trust in her and their sacred space, uncharacteristic in the domains of the mob, which are shrouded in secrecy, dishonesty, and distrust. Dr. Melfi is in control in nearly every aspect of this interaction. Though Tony is physically larger than she, and could force himself onto her if he tried, her physical presence is unwavering and her voice never falters. Tony becomes a vulnerable and emotional being, groveling for her approval, which requires every ounce of her strength not to give.

What makes her denial stronger is that in the previous scene she was dreaming of his hands on her and the titillating possibility of engaging sexually with him. Additionally, Dr. Melfi's sex dream about Tony subverts traditional objectification, positioning Tony as the erotic object to be looked at and fantasized about through Dr. Melfi's subconscious gaze. Tony, as the object, is mirrored through Dr. Melfi's role as Tony's psychiatrist, giving her, the female, the ability and responsibility to bring Tony, who now becomes the passive object, under scrutiny. This scene upends what Mulvey observes about mainstream film, where "an active/passive heterosexual division of labor has...controlled narrative structure. According to the principles of the ruling ideology and the physical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification" (Mulvey 63). Her sexual denial bolsters her dominance in their relationship and adds to Dr. Melfi's individuation against the rest of the characters in the show because, as Staines argues, "If she could not make psychoanalytic interventions and articulate her refusal of his sexual advances, Melfi would be no different from many of the other characters seduced by Tony's charm" (Staines 168). Although she is an object of sexual desire in Tony's eye and vice versa, she does not become one of his various "goomahs", keeping their relationship primarily clinical.

Not only do clinical limitations define their relationship, but Dr. Melfi, as spectator, and Tony, as spectacle, redefine the audience's identification with Tony and the viewers' comparison of Tony against past images of capos. In male dominated cinema, "the split between spectacle and narrative supports the man's role as the active one of forwarding the story, making things happen...This is made possible through the processes set in motion by structuring the film around a main controlling figure with whom the spectator can identify" (Mulvey 63), where the filmmaker's intent is to align the gaze of a male subject as the "main controlling figure" with that of the male viewer. Chase's refreshing choice to structure the series around the activities of both Dr. Melfi and Tony allows identification with a main character by both male and female viewers, contributing to the sensational following the series gained. Audiences are thus invited to engage in the sexual objectification of characters of each sex, as Tony gazes at various women and Dr. Melfi unconsciously fantasizes about Tony. Even Carmela's more minor sexual desires and escapades with the priest and Meadow's principal again subvert the traditional passivity of women, forcing men into the uncomfortable position as an object of sexual desire. This is played out in the sexually charged-scene between Dr. Melfi and Tony in "Two Tonys":

Tony: You're different from what's out there. Not to mention drop dead beautiful.

Dr. Melfi: My training teaches me to go fairly quickly to the idea that what you really want is to come back to therapy.

Tony: Jesus Christ Almighty, come on will ya?!

Dr. Melfi: Your marriage of 20 something years has collapsed. No doubt there are issues with your children.

Tony: Why can't I do something that's just for me for a change?

Dr. Melfi: It would be for you.

Tony: Alright, well I want you. And not just for the smart things you say. I-I-I-I want your skin. I want your mouth. I want your eyes.

Dr. Melfi: You project all these qualities onto me. You don't know me. This is what happens between doctor and patient. (Tony kisses Dr. Melfi.) Don't do that. ("Two Tonys")

She reinforces her clinical intentions in her tone and responses to Tony's advances: "My training teaches me...", "You project all these qualities onto me. You don't know me. This is what happens between doctor and patient." Dr. Melfi maintains composure, speaking to Tony with conviction and courageously denying his flattery and advances. After Tony kisses her, she holds steadfast and strongly tells him, "Don't do that." This is one of the only times anyone ever tells Tony "no". Others may try, but they are met with physical, verbal, or monetary force, making them unable to deny him successfully. Dr. Melfi's ability to draw the line with Tony exposes her control and self-assurance to the audience, as well as her commitment in guiding Tony to therapeutic recovery.

The scene ends with a final line from Tony:

Tony: Outta respect for this office. You know forget about the way Tony Soprano makes his way in the world. That's just to feed his children. There's two Tony Sopranos. You've never seen the other one. That's the one I wanna show to ya. ("Two Tonys")

Ironically Dr. Melfi and, subsequently, the viewer are the only people who have seen both sides of Tony. Ricci writes, "There are in essence two Tonys—the gentle one that he wishes to display to Dr. Melfi, and the monstrous one that, as the view-

er ascertains, moves beyond the double nature of being a family man and into the realm of pathology” (Ricci 128). Though Tony attempts to shelter Dr. Melfi from his gruesome public life, she is far from unaware: “Whereas the viewing audience is often swayed by what seem like reasonable justifications for criminal behavior, Melfi reminds us of Tony’s regular violations of the social contract” (Plourde 74–75). To everyone outside of Dr. Melfi’s office, Tony is known only by the way he makes his living, and though Dr. Melfi knows this fact about him, it is not what defines him to her during their sessions. He exposes his humility, anxieties, and fears to her. These qualities stand juxtaposed to the domineering, aggressive, and ruthless “thug” of a man with which the public and his family are familiar, and the image most viewers previously associated with a mob boss.

Dr. Melfi and the viewer journey through the series unsure of how to categorize Tony in reference to the prototypical villainous Mafia capos to whom audiences are accustomed. As Margrethe Bruun Vaage observes, “[Dr. Melfi] also reminds us as spectators that if we, as our normal non-Mafiosi selves, really inhabited this fictional world we would, as she does, ultimately have to say no to Tony’s way of life, although as spectators of a fiction we sympathize and enjoy it” (Vaage 224). This crucial role of Dr. Melfi as a corrective reader pulls the series further from past Mafioso texts, where viewers are presented with the actions of Mafiosi without any separation between the subject’s actions and the audience’s perceptions. Dr. Melfi’s insertion breaks this “encrypted and closed masculine world of the mob”, bringing the spectator’s interpretations back to reality, reminding us of the sin and illegality that characterize the majority of Tony’s actions (Ricci 121). Therefore, Dr. Melfi’s “corrective reading”, which “reminds us that Tony is not simply a regular guy but also a narcissistic bad guy capable of violence and murder”, empowers the viewer as the most well informed reader of the *The Sopranos* as a text (Plourde 74-75).

Chase, by crossing the multiple thresholds of television, gender relations, and sexual objectification in his retelling of the mob narrative, achieves an “intrecio”, or braiding, of various elements (Ricci 23). The cultural phenomenon, *The Sopranos*, constructed through the innovative choices of director Chase, epitomizes the evolution of mob narratives in visual media from the binding formulae Mulvey describes of traditional cinema. Mulvey’s essay, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, was published in 1975, three years after the release of *The Godfather* (Coppola 1972), widely considered the pinnacle of the mob narrative and cinematic mastery. In her essay, Mulvey encourages future visual narrative to embrace “the thrill that comes from leaving the past behind without rejecting it,

transcending outworn or oppressive forms” as epitomized in films such as *The Godfather* (63). Chase dares “to break with normal pleasurable expectations in order to conceive a new language of desire” (Mulvey 63), positioning *The Sopranos* as a pioneering series, challenging our expectations of television and audience’s perception of *La Cosa Nostra*.

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# LILLIAN LOFTIN

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## EVELYN'S EVOLUTION IN EL BARRIO: AN EVOLUTION OF COMMUNITY, FAMILY AND SELF AND THE THRESHOLD MOMENT FOR EL BARRIO TO REUNITE THEIR PUERTO RICAN PRIDE

IN SONIA MANZANO'S NOVEL *The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano*, the young protagonist Evelyn Serrano denies and despises her Puerto Rican roots and community. Evelyn attempts to detach from her Spanish Harlem neighborhood and Puerto Rican identity, which becomes complicated once her grandmother, Abuela, and the Young Lords, a Puerto Rican activist group, take a stand. The Young Lords in the novel are based off the real Young Lords, a New York based Puerto Rican nationalist a real group of college students who started protesting in the late 1960s the severe political, social and economic inequalities of minority groups. Riots in the streets and protests in the church catch the attention of the Serrano family and no one is convinced there can be change besides Abuela. The community of El Barrio where Evelyn lives starts to heat up, and tensions run high in the Serrano household as Evelyn makes the decision to take control of her own destiny. Abuela's presence and political influence in Evelyn's life plays a significant roll in the events that lead to her threshold moment. Evelyn experiences this threshold as the Young Lords movement begins to reach a climax and tensions run high

with Mami and Abuela. Abuela begins to share stories of her time living in Puerto Rico with mass violence and poverty and Evelyn begins to realize she comes from a place of resilience and strength. The realization allows Evelyn to begin to identify with Abuela and the Young Lord's movement. Her threshold is evident when Evelyn begins to realize the issues in El Barrio are racially charged and no one is doing anything. Before Abuela immigrates to live with Evelyn the United States Evelyn does her best to not identify with her Puerto Rican community, by changing her hair, name and life to create opposition. Ultimately, Evelyn Serrano crosses a threshold when her Abuela advocates for El Barrio. All these activities act as a catalyst to transform Evelyn.

Evelyn struggles throughout the novel with her Puerto Rican identity. She constantly pushes to change her hair, her name, her home and she pushes away from her family. When Evelyn is able to support a cause that meant something to people in her community, she begins to feel the connection that has been lost. Things begin to change for Evelyn when the Young Lords start to attend the neighborhood church. Their presence in the church alone draw attention due to their previous appearance in the streets cleaning and protesting. Evelyn considers their presence as unnecessary because she thinks they have unattainable goals. It becomes evident that Evelyn's family, being very religious, are stressed by the presence of the Young Lords. The Young Lords, coming to this sacred place, give Evelyn the push over her threshold and allow herself to stand up for what is being done. She is able to do that because this is the first time that anyone has advocated for El Barrio.

Evelyn talks about the Young Lords and how they had had come to consecutive Sunday services, and "[A]fter several Sundays of peacefully persisting the Young Lords were starting to win the confidence of the congregation" (Manzano 104). Winning the confidence of the congregation resulted in many positive changes for El Barrio, for religion was highly influential; churches often act as points of gathering for communities, especially for traditional Roman Catholic Puerto Ricans. Prior to this, Evelyn never felt connected with the church. Previous to Evelyn reaching her threshold, she feels reluctant about attending church. The Young Lords talk about how "we deserved better medical care by getting tested for tuberculosis and for lead in our blood" because tuberculosis killed many people of El Barrio, and medical care was scarce (Manzano 104).

The Young Lords stand for what Evelyn has rejected about her community and felt ashamed of her whole life. Now she is able to participate in the revolution.

The Young Lords were a group of activists that organized in New Yorks and Chicago Spanish Harlem, and although *The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano* is a fictional story the Young Lords were a very real activist group. The group started out as a gang of young Puerto Ricans that lived in the Harlem of New York, and later they developed into a Puerto Rican nationalist organization (Ruffians and Revolutionaries). This moment in time was very significant to the revolution because other groups such as the Black Panthers were taking off. The Young Lords paired with ONYX at the City College in New York, and these groups were committed to “Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the NAACP” (The Young Lords). This is notable when looking at the intersectionality within Evelyn’s life.

Mami plays an important role in helping Evelyn evolve. The church is where Mami has always taken Evelyn and is an integral part of Evelyn’s last connection to the Puerto Rican community; however, Mami does not agree with the Young Lords. Evelyn says, “These ideas started to get through. People started to listen. My mother was not convinced” (Manzano 104). Mami’s position does not stop Evelyn. Evelyn understands that her mother is constrained by her fear, and says that “Mami interpreted their attempts as: *We are taking over. We are Communists because we dress like Fidel Castro. We are wild. We will change the world as you know it*” (Manzano 104). This a rather drastic comparison, as Fidel Castro acted as the Cuban President with socialist principles, and he violently and negatively influences the country. Evelyn interprets Mami’s response as fear. When Evelyn describes Mami’s thoughts, she uses ‘we’ to reference the Young Lords and herself are standing for. Mami does not want to lose Evelyn. Evelyn relates to the Young Lords more than she does with her mother, which is a step toward her evolution.

Evelyn reaches a point where it is clear that racism has been very present in her community and has affected how she perceives El Barrio and herself. Evelyn describes El Barrio as very polluted and nearly unlivable, and the Young Lords started their work by cleaning the streets. The community accepts that the city neglected their fundamental human rights because of racism. The Young Lords communicate to the congregation, “that we could have education classes that would make us proud to be Puerto Rican, that society was keeping us poor and that we didn’t deserve it” (Manzano 104). Once the community is confronted with the fact that they do not have to live the way they do, they unite. It is very apparent through Mami, the pastor, and the other community members that they reject the help of the Young Lords: “The Young Lords scared Mami and our pastor. The sight of them in their green army jackets and purple berets and buttons that said



*Puerto Rico is in my heart, Tengo a Puerto Rico en mi corazón*, made Mami and the Pastor quiver” (Manzano 104). Their reaction to the change is out of fear for the unknown. The lack of health care, garbage service, and school funding is discriminatory against the community.

Evelyn gains pride in her Puerto Rican heritage after Abuela explains her life in Puerto Rico to her. Abuela strongly relates to the protesters because she watched so many struggles to get away from Puerto Rico to only end up in the same bleak and dismal situation. Abuela knows the power of what people can do because she saw it first hand, and she does not want Evelyn to grow up without the opportunities and education. The Young Lords put into perspective that it is significant to have pride in their culture and heritage. Evelyn has never experience pride in her identity nor in her family, and the realization that someone other than her family identifies with Puerto Rican heritage is ground breaking. The Young Lords also emphasize how “society was keeping us poor and that we didn’t deserve it” ( Manzano 104). This was a new concept for the community as well as Evelyn. The Young Lords advocate for what the community deserves.

Evelyn Serrano faces her political, social and personal threshold once she approaches the revolution in El Barrio. This process can be considered a “double voiced discourse” (Kirkpatrick 2). In Evelyn’s world there exists a hierarchy, as well as a community and family. Evelyn describes a moment when she is walking home from work when a she sees a family friend get stopped by the police and questioned for selling shaved ice. With this example it can be found that Evelyn is pushed into this hierarchy that Kirkpatrick explains in implement in her life. These moments are constantly reassured Evelyn of an unspoken hierarchy within El Barrio, that it was not valued or cared for by anyone. The trash filled streets, the unsafe drinking water and the uncountable human rights that are violated, fill Evelyn and her community with a distaste of their own culture because they are told to be. Evelyn feels this system of hierarchy indirectly through her community and she directly faces the consequence of this within her family, especially through her mother and Abuela. Due to these interactions and these out side forces Evelyn is able to reach a threshold. Kirkpatrick is an author who approaches the issue of women and their character development in literature. Kirkpatrick writes how there is a female code within a hierarchy; the origin of this system comes from “the marginality of women... and women vexed in relation to language” (232). These issues are presented in Evelyn relationships were a clear indication of the marginality of women and how women are limited by language. These issues are displayed

through her mother due to her internalization of the systemic racism. Evelyn experiences first hand her mother's rejection of the Young Lords plea for change in the El Barrio and her direct connection with Fidel Castro. Similarly, this fear that has been implemented in her mother has also been instilled in Evelyn. Evelyn changes her name because it is a Puerto Rican name and she refused to work in her families shop due to the identification with her Puerto Rican roots. Evelyn has been completely marginalized in her society as well as vexed by her language by changing her name. Evelyn's threshold moment is so apparent because there is an innovation within her. Evelyn's familial, social and political forces make it possible for her to reach her threshold by lifting a veil of insecurity. Abuela discontinues the trend in Evelyn's life after she began to advocate for Puerto Rico and the change that needs to happen in El Barrio. Abuela was the first person in her life to be proud of her Puerto Rican heritage and that it is important to recognize that the Young Lords are here to help and they are for a good cause. There is a theme of consistency in the Young Lords and Abuela that Evelyn experiences that leads up to the moment in the church when she begins her evolution. The continuous push to back on society and the inequalities in El Barrio from Abuela and the Young Lords leads Evelyn Serrano to create change in the place where hate was stagnate.

When looking at a character's threshold moment there are key characteristics, as Mascolo writes that a "character consists of an integrated, yet dynamic, system of thinking, feeling and acting, organized with reference to social and moral values" (Mascolo 1). When looking at her system of thinking and acting, Evelyn is able to transform the way she has once understood what was happening in El Barrio and results of her actions. Evelyn's agency transforms within these pivotal moments when the Young Lords speak about what she has been experiencing her whole life. In the close reading passage the Young Lord describe, "that we could have classes that would make us proud to be Puerto Rican" (Manzano 104). First hand Evelyn rejects her Puerto Rican heritage, she has seen what it means to be Puerto Rican in El Barrio. When there is a dynamic set of thought or action within Evelyn it is with reference to social and moral values that society has made clear in El Barrio (Mascolo 1). To reach a threshold there must a "relational-developmental framework itself with its stipulation that character, like all forms of psychological activity, emerges over time as a dynamic, multidimensional, and coactive process." (Mascolo 1). Evelyn preserves her life from so many dimensions that her threshold moment is built up off of family history, experience and social and political change.

Evelyn's true threshold lies within her identity and through out time identity

shifts and characters are always developing. The novel takes place during a historic revolution in the United States. The Young Lords created a drastic movement that “successfully advocated for improved sanitation in East Harlem and organized against police brutality” (The Young Lords) as mentioned previously the Young Lords put on were actual events such as “free breakfast program... Their lead poisoning campaigns eventually resulted in the passage of anti-lead legislation and the establishment of the Bureau of lead poisoning in New York” (The Young Lords). These events reflected a real revolution that happened in the United States and positively affected so many people. Like many revolutions it was a necessary for the community to experience change to be able to experience life with the same equality has the rest of Chicago parallel to these events Evelyn has a evolution. Notably Evelyn goes through the motions of life, internalizing the systemic racism that is present in her community. Before her threshold she is committed to dis-identifying with her name and heritage. Changing her name, committing to leaving El Barrio and despising the last bit of connection she has to Puerto Rican Culture. These actions are a result of “feeling and acting, organized with reference to social and moral values” (Macolo,1), just as Macolo explained. Once there is a shift within Evelyn's environment that was positive her evolution began. Evelyn contributed to the revolution, which in turn lead to the threshold of change.

Evelyn Serrano's journey through her threshold was not an easy one by any means. The struggle and marginalization that her community faced was horrible, and history might be one of the most difficult conversations to have. More over it is way more powerful to over come and triumph, as Evelyn did in El Barrio. Understanding Evelyn's threshold moment took a plethora of contributions including, Abuela and her stories, Mami, the Young Lords, the church, and El Barrio. This shaped Evelyn from start to finish, but it was her individual agency was truly brought Evelyn from her internalized racism and prejudice of El Barrio, to a righteous, proud, Puerto Rican advocate for her community. It is evident that Evelyn reached her threshold moment in the church, due to the fact that multiple factors in her life joined together in one place and began a revolution no only within the community but an evolution within Evelyn.

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# DAKOTA MACCOLL

Dakota MacColl is a junior at the University of Oregon, majoring in biology and minoring in comparative literature. Her intellectual interests include studying microbiology, analyzing films, and writing essays. In her free time, she enjoys watching a variety of movies, television shows, and lectures. She became interested in the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* after watching and discussing it in an academic context.

Mentor: **Rob Moore**

## *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY* SEEN THROUGH A DELEUZEAN LENS: HOW THE MONOLITH CAN REPRESENT BOTH A TIME-IMAGE AND A MOVEMENT-IMAGE

IT IS DAWN, SLIGHTLY BEFORE THE SUN has had a chance to be even noticeable in the desert landscape. Among a troop of sleeping apes, one set of eyes slowly opens for what seems to be another day of strife and struggle to stay alive in a world without food and full of threats. What the ape sees puzzles him at first, but he is equally interested. Before him and the other apes stands a tall dark stone that appeared overnight without any warning. A sense of fear and excitement overcomes the apes as they interact with the new addition to their landscape. What follows this interaction is a series of events that send the apes on a journey of evolution that can ultimately be attributed to the appearance of the monolith.

The scene above describes the first encounter with the monolith in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*. What is the monolith, what is its function, and perhaps most importantly, what does it mean? Many have tackled the task of identifying the function of the monolith. In order to define specifically how and why the monolith functions, I will first explore the concepts of time-images and

movement-images, which originate from French philosopher Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema I* and *Cinema II*. Deleuze's notion of a time-image is "to make perceptible, to make visible, relationships of time which cannot be seen in the represented object" and it also allows "a coexistence of distinct durations, or levels of duration; a single event can belong to several levels: the sheets of past coexist in a non-chronological order." Deleuze describes a time-image as an image that is able to create something new that is not already perceptible in cinema. The time-image itself does not necessarily mean anything at all, nor is it needed to be an object that is relatable to its function, but rather creates an experience of time that did not exist before the time-image was created.

In other words, a time-image makes complicated relationships perceptible by being present, by creating and facilitating a new experience of time that was not already there and cannot be experienced without the time-image. Additionally, though, it is "not quite right to say that the cinematographic image is in the present. What is in the present is what the image 'represents' but not the image itself." Again, Deleuze is careful to describe the notion of representation, and how a time-image does not exist for itself or by itself, but rather exists to make other relationships of time perceptible.

Deleuze's definition of a movement-image has many layers, and for the purposes of this paper I will define only the specific details of a movement-image I find important and necessary. First, it is important to understand the differences between the whole and sets. Defining the whole is best understood by defining what sets are. Sets are "closed... Sets are always sets of parts. But a whole is not closed, it is open; and it has no parts... The whole might well be, we conceive, an indivisible continuity." In short, there are sets, say, of time, that exist independently of one another, closed off, with no connection to one another. However, they still coexist alongside one another. A whole is an open plane that exists by itself and is not divided easily, for if something happens in a whole, it changes the whole completely. A whole has duration, a linear connection from beginning to end, while sets are immobile.

Now that the 'parts' of time are understood, how movement functions can now be explored. Deleuze's notion of movement is something that can happen between parts, or something that expresses the whole. In that way, movement can occur both in the duration of a whole, and it can happen between independent sets. When movement is present in a whole, "the whole is divided up into objects, and objects are re-united in the whole, and indeed between the two the whole

changes.” When movement is present between sets, it “relates the objects or parts to the duration of a whole which changes, and thus expresses the changing of the whole in relation to the objects.” In this way, the presence of movement can transform a whole into parts, and can transform parts into a new whole. As Monaco describes, “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”

A movement-image can be defined as something concrete, something that takes up space, that is not necessarily *for* anyone or addressed to any one particular thing, but is presented in a complete, immediate perception. By having a concrete movement-image, the movement in a whole or the movement between sets of time can be understood. The splitting of a whole and the opening of connections between sets would not necessarily be perceptible without a movement-image.

Now that the definitions of time-image and movement-image are clear, I will explore the monolith as a time-image first, and then as a movement-image. The monolith first appears in the film during the first set of scenes called “The Dawn of Man.” It appears after a few short scenes that show a troop of apes struggling to survive in a barren land. It seems to appear mysteriously overnight, and the apes are equally startled by and interested in it. After the apes directly interact with the monolith by touching it, the scenes that follow show signs of the apes evolving by beginning to use bones as tools, standing more upright than the apes in the rival troop, and conquering obstacles like starvation that were withering them away before the appearance of the monolith.

After this progression in the ape troop, there is a scene that shows one ape in particular picking up a bone and using it to violently crush other bones into pieces. This scene is in slow motion, and what follows is arguably one of the most iconic match cuts. As the ape raises the bone, he lets go, and the camera follows the progression of the bone up into the air, and also as the bone begins to fall back towards the ground. However, instead of the bone falling to the ground or back into the ape’s hand, there is a match cut that cuts to a space vessel, floating downwards on the screen in the bone’s place (see Fig. 1).

The monolith with this time jump that spans over millions of years may not be immediately apparent. However, that is exactly why and how the monolith acts as a time-image: it is not necessary for it to be a direct part of this match cut because its presence has established a new relationship of time. Recall that one of the functions of a time-image is to make visible relationships of time that are *not* represented in the object itself. The monolith is just an object, but what it represents is what makes it a time-image. As said by André Bazin, “The meaning is not

in the image, it is in the shadow of the image projected by montage onto the field of consciousness of the spectator.”

The monolith does not represent time itself or even an aspect of time that already exists in the film. Rather, in this case, it creates an *experience* of time that was not already there. It makes sense out of what Deleuze would explain as “false continuity in modern cinema,” or the notion of irrational cuts. Even though this cut is irrational, the monolith as a time-image helps to make perceptible that this progression of millions of years can happen in less than a second. The presence of

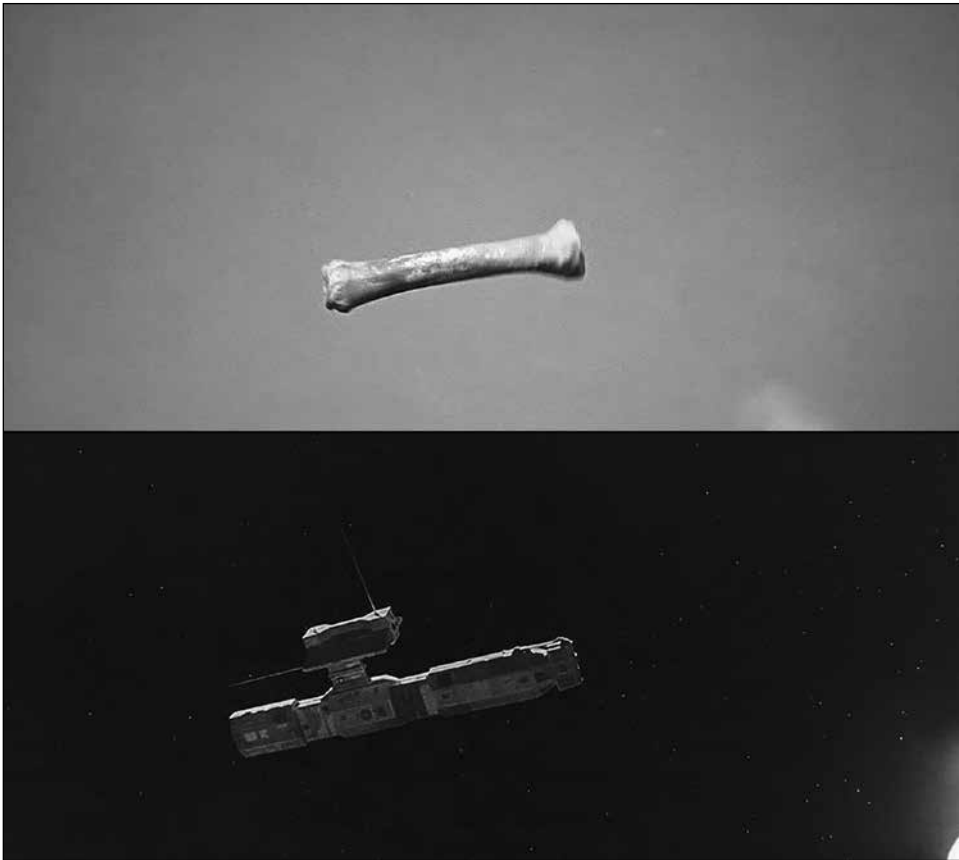


FIGURE 1

the monolith seems to push the ape troop forward, speeding up the duration of the scenes. The first scenes of the apes struggling spanned over a few days, signaled by the signposts of sunrise and sunset. However, after interacting with the monolith, the scenes of the apes surviving and thriving only last what seems to be one day. This progression of time and presence of the monolith helps to make sense of the



match cut time jump that jumps millions of years into the future.

The next set of scenes in the film show a doctor traveling to the moon for a top-secret mission, which turns out to be the examination of a monolith. Notice how the first set of scenes feature apes, and the second set of scenes feature humans on the moon. This difference is significant, emphasizing that the monolith is a time-image necessary to make sense of the time jump that the match cut created. On the moon, a team of scientists arrive at an excavation site that reveals what appears to be the same monolith. The reappearance of the monolith as a concrete object in a different context and time period is another example of its use as a time-image. The scientists examine the monolith, and, like the apes, directly interact with it by touching it. The monolith lets out a sudden, loud shrieking noise, and a low angle shot of the monolith aligning with the sun and moon that has appeared before in “The Dawn of Man” set appears in this new set of scenes. Immediately after, there is another time jump with a match cut.

The next set of time in the film starts with the text “Jupiter Mission: 18 months later.” The focus has shifted to three main characters: Dave, his partner Frank, and the HAL 9000 computer system. However, the focus is primarily on Dave and his interactions with HAL. The interactions he has with the computer give insight into Dave’s interiority. During the mission to get to Jupiter, Dave and his partner begin to run into problems with HAL. HAL ends up killing Frank and locking Dave out of the spaceship. HAL refuses to give Dave an explanation of why he will not let him in the ship, so Dave is forced to enter the ship through an airlock port and shut down HAL manually in order to continue the mission. Once HAL is shut down, a monitor turns on and a man appears to explain the purpose of the mission in detail and why Dave and his now-deceased team are going to Jupiter. According to the prerecorded tape, the monolith on the moon sent out a single radio transmission to Jupiter when it let out the shrieking noise, signaling that intelligent life may be at the receiving end of that transmission. This is the first time in the film someone directly describes what the monolith did, but how and why is still yet to be understood. Interestingly, after this scene, the film has an intermission that lasts about ten minutes.

After the intermission, a new set of time appears with text that reads “Jupiter and Beyond the Infinite.” This signpost establishes that Dave has in fact reached his destination. Again, Dave and his whole team were supposed to arrive together, but instead, Dave is alone. Shortly after, his spaceship can be seen arriving near Jupiter and its moons, a monolith can be seen floating horizontally through the

space. This provides an interesting change of perspective. The monolith still functions as a time-image because it creates an experience of time that is not already present, and makes several complicated and coexisting relationships of time visible and understandable.

However, in this set of time, the monolith is moving through space on its own, whereas in the previous sets of time, it was vertical and solitary. This change of perception and movement is critical to understanding the existence of the monolith as both a time-image and a movement-image.

Dave is shown in a small surveyor craft approaching Jupiter when the monolith appears again in front of him. The camera pans up and the iconic wormhole scene begins. Time now becomes ambiguous. After the wormhole scene is completed, Dave reaches a mysterious well-lit room, still in the surveyor craft. He exits the craft and begins to carefully explore his surroundings. Dave goes through the room for a few minutes and encounters a predicament. As he goes through the room he examines certain areas. For example, the first room he enters is the bathroom and he stares at the bathtub, as if trying to recall something. He ends up in the bathtub, staring at where he once stood, but he is clearly older: he has aged. This same pattern happens multiple times, a younger Dave looking to where an older Dave will be, and the older Dave looking back but the younger Dave is not there. Time only moves forward and he ages rapidly each time this occurs. The monolith, though not present, is still primarily functioning as a time-image by further presenting a solution and comprehension to irrational time.

After aging rapidly, Dave is bed-ridden and near death. The monolith appears one final time, hovering vertically near the edge of the bed. Dave reaches out to the monolith, and it appears to get closer and closer to Dave.

As the monolith approaches, the camera movement suggests that Dave not only touches the monolith, but moves through it, and on the other “side” of the monolith, “Starchild” exists instead of Dave, a new evolution of man, a being of pure light and energy. “Starchild” can be seen floating through space, and the end of the film approaches as the sun rises over “Starchild.”

The last scene with the monolith presents an evolution not only of Dave and man into a new realm, but it also signals the evolution of the monolith itself from a time-image into a movement-image. Up until that scene, the monolith had existed solely to create understandable experiences and relationships of time that, without it, seem to be irrational. However, with the plot of the film complete, the monolith’s true function shows that it was necessary to get man, and specifically Dave,

to a new evolutionary form. Throughout the film, the monolith only functions as a time-image moving forward, and only exists as a movement-image retrospectively.

After watching the film fully, the function of the monolith as a movement-image can be understood. For example, the monolith's presence allowed movement through the separate sets of time. Even though the sets of time periods coexisted alongside one another, they had no narrative connection if not for the monolith. The forward movement through the sets by the monolith created a new whole out of a set of parts; it gave chronological and linear duration to a new whole by allowing movement throughout the previously separate parts. The monolith, then, showed that it not only created movement through sets of time, it is the movement of separate sets of time as a movement-image.

The monolith can further be described as a movement-image simply because of the object that it is. It is not any one particular thing, and it has no meaning, it is not "for" anyone or anything except when the plot has reached its end. It can be retrospectively described as being the object that represents the *telos* of the film, or "the internal logic that connects one event to another within the story." By the end of the film only, the monolith's function as a narrative plot device and movement-image becomes clear. In this way, the monolith evolves into a movement-image. However, its evolution into a movement-image would not necessarily be cohesive had it not been perceived as a time-image first. That is to say, in this context, the function of the monolith as a movement-image relies on its function first as a time-image. It must be made apparent that the monolith provides a perception of levels of duration of time before movement can be established, or, as Ronald Bogue describes, "In the absence of a consciousness to perceive it, there is no movement from one moment to the next." In this way, movement is subordinate to time, but time becomes subordinate to movement by the end of the film, because without creating duration with movement, "there would be no *movement* of time, no passage from one moment into the next."

In the ways explored above, the monolith can coexist as both a time-image and a movement-image in the same film. I believe this is because of the evolution that takes place of the monolith from a time-image to a movement-image. It does not exist as both at the same time, but rather, becomes a different cinematographic image by the end of the film. The monolith functions as a time-image by appearing in multiple separate sets of time, but it is not that it solely appears that makes it a time-image; rather, it is what its appearance represents. The monolith's presence creates an understanding that time can be experienced in a new way that creates

connections between irrational cuts in the film separated by vast amounts of time. The monolith also functions as a movement-image by the end of the film by making clear that it was closely tied to the narrative of the film, and more specifically tied to the narrative moving forward through and connecting sets of time. It created a new chronological movement forward to a new whole from the sets of time with which it once existed in, and evolved into the plot device that allowed man to evolve along with it. The function of the monolith as a time-image can be understood moving forward, and the function of the monolith as a movement-image can be understood by looking back.

In conclusion, the monolith created the movement and necessary connections through time to allow man to arrive at the ultimate evolutionary threshold. Without its presence, the final evolution of Dave into a new being would not have been achieved. Additionally, the narrative, which was encumbered with movements of false continuity, would not be connected in a meaningful, comprehensible way. The monolith's different levels of existence further provide evidence that it is a fluid, changing vessel. It is not relegated one function, but rather it encompasses diverse roles when required. This level of complex existence of an image in a film is a threshold of its own, but the monolith surpasses the thresholds it creates by bringing man, and itself, through the gateway to a new evolutionary form of being in Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

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# MICHELLE MCKENNA

Michelle McKenna is a comparative literature major with concentrations in French and History. This is her second year at the University of Oregon. She is very interested in history and culture, as well as women's roles in the two. For this reason, she was interested in researching the myth of the French Woman and her relationship to the cultural divide between French and American women.

Mentor: **Joanna Myers**

## CULTURAL THRESHOLDS: AMERICAN WOMEN'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE FRENCH WOMAN

FOR DECADES, THE WORLD OF FASHION and entertainment has romanticized stereotyped behavior and appearances of French women, ultimately creating the myth of the French Woman. Between various articles on American Vogue's website, Woody Allen's *Midnight in Paris*, and Mireille Guiliano's *French Women Don't Get Fat*, female American audiences are constantly exposed to the French Woman. She is attractive, confident, independent, charismatic, and difficult to accurately define. As French model and actress Aymeline Valade advises in the *Vogue* video "5 Tips to Be the Perfect French Woman," the French Woman "never [feels] pressure to look perfect"—but usually does look perfect—and "[says] enough, but not too much, to keep them wondering" (Bailly). Her advice perfectly captures what is so unique about the French Woman: her mystery and her imperfect perfection. The myth of the French Woman, as immortalized by both American and French visual media and entertainment, personifies the cultural threshold between French and American women.

*Midnight in Paris*, written and directed by Woody Allen, provides a particularly unique insight into this phenomenon. The movie is very much shot from the platform of a cultural threshold. Gil, an American writer, visits Paris with his American fiancée and her American parents. He enjoys interacting with the city

and its inhabitants, and is fascinated by Paris' history. He eventually time-travels to 1920s Paris, where he meets contemporary literary and artistic figures, including a young French woman, Adriana, played by Marion Cotillard.

Adriana is a muse to Pablo Picasso, Amedeo Modigliani, Georges Braque, and perhaps to Gil himself. In placing Adriana alongside these great men—perhaps even above them because she inspires them and sparks their creativity—Adriana upholds the French Woman's stereotypically inherent seductive and inimitable nature. She has also studied fashion with Coco Chanel, a detail which proves Adriana to be effortlessly chic and elegant. Aside from her accomplishments and engagement with others, Adriana's very being captures elements of stereotypical French femininity. From her refined, sophisticated beauty to her interactions with artistic and literary heroes, as well as her poised and subtly glamorous mannerisms, Adriana represents the French Woman. Gil is left in awe of Adriana, and later attempts to reminisce on what it was about her that struck him; at a loss for the appropriate words, he simply exclaims, "That girl was so lovely" (*Midnight in Paris*). Gil's lack of significant descriptors ties back to another characteristic of the French Woman: mystery. Her mystifying nature goes further than her literal foreignness; it is largely based in the fact that it is simply part of her French femininity. Adriana's confirmation of the myth of the French Woman, and particularly her mysteriousness, enchant Gil.

Gil also interacts with a similar French woman, Gabrielle (Léa Seydoux), but this time while he is in 21st-Century Paris. She, too, upholds this French femininity. She works at a flea market, selling various relics of the past, including Cole Porter records. Viewers learn less about her life than Adriana's, but Allen's writing, as well Seydoux's acting, also perpetuates this air of mystery and intrigue. Gabrielle appears confident and at ease with herself and her surroundings, all while leaving something to be desired. Like with Adriana, Gil's rather quick interaction with Gabrielle leaves a significant impression on him. For once, he is also at ease and doing what he wants at his own pace. Gabrielle does not rush him or force conversation upon him; she simply talks to him about music. Gabrielle's simple interaction with Gil is juxtaposed in the next shot where Gil's fiancée, Inez, interrupts and orders him to hurry up, her tone sharp and belittling.

This contrast between the French women and Inez alludes to the differences between the French Woman and the American Woman, ultimately maintaining the French Woman's universal superiority. Allen writes Inez as a foil to the French women. Whereas the French women's tones of voice and attitudes are enticing,

sexy, and welcoming, Inez always appears stressed, exasperated, and condescending. She is most often shown talking or barking orders at Gil. Most importantly, Inez seems uninterested in Gil's opinions and his true passion, writing novels. She treats Gil's novel as a joke, and condescendingly puts his dreams down in front of her friends, telling them "Gil doesn't even know if he can write a novel" (*Midnight in Paris*). She also teases Gil for wishing he could live in "Paris in the twenties — in the rain," saying that he "would be just fine living in a perpetual state of denial" (*Midnight in Paris*). In turn, this breeds a hostile, unwelcoming atmosphere for Gil and his creativity, eventually prompting him to declare that "[he] [doesn't] like to discuss [his] work" (*Midnight in Paris*).

However, Gil is comfortable discussing these things with the French women; they welcome such discussions and express genuine interest. For example, when he first meets Adriana, Gil is comfortable with Gertrude Stein reading an excerpt from his novel aloud and welcomes feedback and discussion. Adriana tells Gil "[she] love[s] it" and "[is] already hooked" (*Midnight in Paris*). She recognizes this reading to be a significant event in itself and greets it with an encouraging and valuable response, which any fledgling novelist subconsciously desires to hear.

Perhaps the most obvious difference between these women in this instance is their contrasting appreciation of the arts. Inez hopes Gil will simply continue writing screenplays because, although formulaic and uninteresting, they have a static place within the movie industry. In other words, there is always a need for screenwriters and always money to be made as a result. Inez is not appreciative of Gil's truly artistic need to produce something of significant value. Adriana basically symbolizes a love for the arts. As a muse to 20th-Century artistic masters, she possesses a profound appreciation for and is able to discuss their work. Adriana seems to understand the workings of an artistic mind; after a fight with Picasso, she says, "he's moody and possessive. Artists are all like children" (*Midnight in Paris*). Although this is not a flattering depiction of artists, it speaks to Adriana's stereotypically French ability to understand artists. Gabrielle similarly appreciates art, as shown during her initial interaction with Gil. Though brief, this attribute is apparent when, upon seeing Gil enjoying an old phonograph playing a Cole Porter record, she asks Gil if "[he] like[s] Cole Porter" (*Midnight in Paris*). This very simple interaction reveals so much: Gabrielle is genuinely interested in what Gil, a stranger to her, thinks of the music. She recognizes and appreciates his interest in the music, to which she responds by seeking his opinion. Given that Gabrielle sells antiques, one can also assume she understands what draws people to art and



objects of the past; she, as a French Woman, relates to Gil's artistic interests.

The differences between these women's appearances also furthers the film's claim that the French Woman is a superior female. Inez does not stand out on the screen; neither with her unremarkable energy nor her physicality. For example, she wears muted colors, like light blue, gray, white, and cream. Her clothes are also free of patterns and designs. Most noticeably, Inez wears many collared, button-down tops and dresses, always paired with belts. Although the belts are intended to break up the formality of these dresses, their original no-nonsense, rigid structures remain. In addition, the fact that none of her outfits are explicitly casual or formal calls attention to the very American theme of efficiency and versatility. These are not necessarily bad qualities; however, given Inez's character, they further emphasize her very hurried attitude. Her clothes are not meant to express her individuality; they are simply there to clothe her regardless of where she might be.

In addition, Inez's hair poses a great juxtaposition to that of the French women. While her loose curls are intended to look effortless, their careful symmetry and immobility allude to time spent in front of a mirror, painstakingly curling and styling. This purposeful effort is nowhere to be found in the French women's beauty routine. Their appearance is sincerely effortless, as if to say French women are innately perfect in a natural state. While viewers can tell the French women care about their appearances, they do not look overdone or forced. In particular, Adriana's clothing allows for movement and expresses who she is. Specifically, in one scene, she wears a gold dress that is covered in intricate beading. The dress could overwhelm a different woman, but it fits Adriana perfectly because she wears it, and not the other way around. The dress also perfectly represents her, as the French Woman: its precise detailing speaks to her artistic appreciation; the way it falls, revealing just a hint of her figure, plays into her mystery; and she looks tremendously at ease wearing it. When combined, Adriana subtly commands a room, attracting every eye.

In analyzing the French Woman, it is clear that she is a myth, as defined by Roland Barthes in the section of *Mythologies* entitled "Myth Today." Barthes uses a structure of signifier, signified, and sign to discuss the construction of myths, which he believes to be rooted in language and culture or history (Barthes 40). When pairing the French Woman with Barthes' "Myth Today," we begin to decode the myth of the French Woman. It is all too easy to use Barthes' criteria dissect the myth. Allow me to play mythologist. First, the signifier is an actual French woman, not only an actress or character in a novel. In looking at French women's attributes

on a larger scale—in other words, disregarding individual discrepancies and outliers—the signified aspect of Barthes' theory is French women's overall femininity, style, sexuality, and so on, as well as the ease with which they possess and exhibit these qualities. As a result, the sign indicates that French women are inherently sexy, chic, etc. The myth posed by these components constructs the idea that the French Woman is everyone's ideal woman, whether she is your friend, your shopping companion, or romantic partner. The myth identifies French women as being superior to all other women.

Barthes also points out that myth is "a caricature more than a portrait," which further validates the French Woman as a constructed myth (Barthes 40). Appropriately, this myth has been perpetuated by sources of entertainment like film and literature. As such, the myth has grown so that it is universally understood and somewhat supported by the masses. While it might not apply to all French women, the myth of the French Woman is appealing in its foreignness, in addition to the desirable traits associated with it. To American women, this foreignness is especially appealing. In particular, the language with which Americans describe the French Woman's traits speaks to this obsession with foreignness. For example, consider the phrase *je ne sais quoi*. One might say "she has that *je ne sais quoi*" to describe a woman who is mysterious or sexy or captivating, which are desirable traits most often attributed to the French Woman. The fact that this is a French phrase that is far more commonly used in English-speaking settings than in French reiterates American fascination with French culture and the French Woman. It also speaks to the widely supported notion that the French are superior in terms of taste and attitude.

*Midnight in Paris* further supports this myth's believability. Perhaps the inclusion of characteristically similar but chronologically different women serves to illustrate the consistent presence of the French Woman in both modern and historical societies. In the past, she appears to be somewhat of a fabled myth; however, the existence of a modern-day counterpart substantiates the myth so much that one both believes in the myth of the French Woman and can more closely relate to the idealized French women of the past. In other words, the French Woman is still relevant and is rooted both in the past and present. Still, the film is very much the stuff of Gil's intrinsically rose-colored, American perspective. He is nostalgic for a time he never knew, and projects his fantasy onto those he encounters and the city itself. The same can be said of the woman. Perhaps, rather than represent something uniquely French, they represent something American: Gil's stereotyped,

romantic view of French culture, which reflects accordingly upon French women and thus perpetuates the French Woman myth.

Outside of film, we most often see support for this myth upon browsing any print or online magazine. American Vogue, often considered to be the foremost fashion news source for most American women, routinely publishes articles on its website concerning this topic. Typing “French” into the search bar brings up hundreds of articles to choose from: “The French Girl’s Guide to Festival Dressing,” “5 Tips to Be the Perfect French Woman,” “The 7 French Models You Need to Know Now,” “The French Girl’s Guide to Holiday Gifting,” “French Girls Do Everything Better, Even Instagram (And It’s Because They Don’t Care),” “Can You Bottle French Girl Beauty? 6 Products That Add Up to Oui,” “The French Girls’ Guide to Instagram,” and “The French Girl’s Guide to the Chicest Hotels in New York, London, Paris, and Beyond.” The titles alone speak volumes about American women’s obsession with their French counterparts’ habits and attributes. These instructive articles effectively imply the French Woman is an expert in all of the concerned areas. The last title mentioned is particularly interesting; the French Woman is not only an expert on her own country and culture, but she is so well informed that her opinion on other countries holds equal esteem. These articles all uphold qualities traditionally associated with the French Woman, but they particularly highlight the fact that she is timeless. In “The French Girls’ Guide to Instagram,” writer Marina Khorosh claims the “social media epidemic” sweeping across America “somehow bypassed the trend-resilient French, kind of like ’80s fitnessmania and athleisure” (Khorosh). While American women and culture are often intimately associated with ridiculous trends, the French have sought to remain classic. The resulting inability to root the French Woman within a time period makes her less relatable and, therefore, increasingly mythical. She is a consistent, steadfast character whenever portrayed.

This American-targeted how-to is further reiterated, and more blatantly so, in Mireille Guiliano’s *French Women Don’t Get Fat*. The book is not about dieting; it is a lifestyle book that encourages living life as French women do—with pleasure, most importantly. Guiliano began to consciously pay attention to these cultural divides upon returning to France fat after studying abroad in America. Her book is a tell-all of what she learned through her experiences in rediscovering her French femininity. This is also reiterated on her website, where she preaches the necessity for all the attributes of the French Woman: possessing timeless style, being an excellent cook, understanding seduction and romance, and, above all, mak-

ing everything appear effortless. In this instance, the French Woman is no longer just the most interesting character in a film or novel; she is attainable. Guiliano presents what is essentially a how-to guide for modeling one's life in the style of the French Woman's. Pairing this book with *Midnight in Paris* further removes the French female characters from the film, transforming them into real people whose qualities an American woman might strive to attain—with the help of Guiliano's book, of course. In addition, Guiliano's book does not have an age limit, nor is it meant for a specific age group. The French Woman is timeless, and age has nothing to do with her significance. She is always relevant, no matter when she exists. This transcendence across age divides ties back to *Midnight in Paris* and the film's cross-decade French female characters.

Most significantly, the book also encourages knowledge. Like the characters in *Midnight in Paris*, Guiliano encourages readers to be informed on history, culture, art, food, and local happenings (Guiliano). In contrast to *Vogue* magazine's skin-deep articles on achieving French hair or style or beauty, Guiliano takes her advice deeper. Essentially, she asks her readers to make larger lifestyle and personal changes. Guiliano highlights perhaps what is most intriguing about the French Woman: her mind and conversational skill. This is a theme that is perfectly demonstrated in *Midnight in Paris*. As mentioned earlier, Gil finds far better conversation and is more intellectually stimulated by his interactions with the French women. With Inez, the conversations feel superficial. Gil himself alludes to this when he tells Adriana, "we [don't] agree on everything," to which she responds, "But the important things" (*Midnight in Paris*). This further unravels when Gil continues, saying, "Actually the small things—the important things we don't—she'd like to live in Malibu and that I'd work in Hollywood—but I will say we both like Indian food" (*Midnight in Paris*). Their disagreements do not lead to thought-provoking conversation, do they seem to possess similar values, and they barely get along even on a basic level. As a result, viewers tend to favor Gil's relationship with Adriana—and Gabrielle, by default—thus subtly highlighting the French Woman's superiority even during interactions with American men.

Granted, the ideology discussed in this essay primarily focuses on French culture through the lens of American rose-colored lenses. However, it is worth noting that the French do have a fascination with American culture and entertainment as well. In "Why French Girls—Like Seemingly Everyone Else These Days—Are Moving to Los Angeles," Eviana Hartman points out, "if L.A. would seem to be the absolute inverse of Paris—culturally, physically, and sartorially—that's sort of

the point” (Hartman). She quotes Parisian designer Flavie Webster as saying, “The difference is what is attractive to us. [...] There is a sense of creative freedom here that I don’t feel anywhere else” (Hartman). However, these French ex-pats largely appreciate Los Angeles for its similarities to Paris: “The cities do, however, share a certain *joie de vivre*—an emphasis on food, friends and family, and work-life balance, or as perfumer Marie du Petit Thouars of Maison Louis Marie says, ‘a lifestyle conducive to indulging in the things we French people love’” (Hartman). It is this factor that ultimately upholds the French Woman’s superiority. The newness of a foreign place is attractive to her; however, the substance behind that attraction consists of cultural aspects that are traditionally thought to be the “best” in France.

Khorosh takes this preference for the creativity allowed by American culture a step further in her article “French Girls Don’t Do It Better: One Writer on Her Return to New York.” Here, she somewhat refutes American women’s adoration for this cultural threshold. During her time in Paris, Khorosh found herself limited by the French ideals of style: “living here is like being at your grandmother’s house, if your grandmother happens to reside in an antiquated mansion: exquisite yet—dare I say it?—exceedingly boring” (Khorosh). Khorosh highlights something not often considered when thinking about the French Woman: it is possible that what might be classic can also turn monotonous. Perhaps, however, the differences posed by French culture prevented Khorosh from truly, comfortably identifying with or accepting what being a true French Woman entails.

Even though Guiliano’s book and *Vogue* articles somewhat make the French Woman’s attributes seem attainable to American readers, there is still a significant cultural threshold in place barring American women from perfectly exemplifying the French Woman—the fact that they are American, not French. This difference can neither be helped nor changed, and it is presented most obviously in Gil’s vastly different relationships to Adriana and Inez. Still, it has not stopped American women from attempting to mirror their French counterparts. Above all, it is the unattainability of this cultural threshold that only reinforces people’s desire to emulate and enjoy the company of the French Woman.

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# ADAM MEAD

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Mentor: **Dr. Ken Calhoon**

## CHANGING HEARTS THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

**BURNED BODIES, DEFORMED FACES**, and mangled soldiers were the sights of the Vietnam War to which the American people were exposed in the sixties and seventies. The use of Napalm, implementation of the draft, and a mixture of unfiltered newsreels allowed insight into the nation's fourth most deadly war. President Richard Nixon instituted the draft during his first term in 1969 and was in full effect until 1973; young men were being forced into a war that they possibly did not supported, or of which they desired to be a part. However, the United States government never recognized the conflict in Vietnam as a war. As a result, photographs, film, and print were broadcast to millions of people unfiltered by the American military. The mixture of uncensored newsreels along with the technological advancement in portable photography allowed insight into an American conflict unlike any other.

The covers of magazines and newspapers were displayed with photographs and headlines of Vietnam while the nightly news broadcast footage and special features of the troops abroad. With this new lens came an American public who were both disgusted with yet intrigued by the war. Americans were constantly reading and watching updates partially due to the endless barrage from news outlets, but many people were also personally affected by the war, knowing someone who enlisted or was drafted, which compelled the public to follow the war even more closely. The result was a proliferation of often graphic images, which appeared regularly in newspapers, magazines, and on the evening news. Certain images, such as those of the Burning Monk, Kim Phuc, My Lai Massacre and the Kent State Mas-

sacre were so disturbing that their publication was instrumental in shifting public opinion against the war effort. This threshold, however, proved to be ambiguous, as the same photographs that tested the public's patience also exercised a certain fascination over the public's attention. With reference to Michael Herr's memoir *Dispatches* (1977), this essay will examine the chronicle of his war experience, while also explaining the American people's fascination with the war through Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art and Mechanical Reproduction." The role of film, radio, and print journalism were significant in changing the American public's view of the war; however, this essay will focus on the influence and power of photography during war.

The conflict in Vietnam began in 1955 as the U.S. began to aide South Vietnam against their communist counterpart, the North Vietnamese Army (NVA). America's involvement escalated in the early sixties, and with that came increased media attention. In 1963, hundreds of Buddhist monks and nuns blocked an intersection in Saigon, in the middle of which Thich Quang Duc sat and set himself on fire in protest of the South Vietnamese government. The photograph, taken by Malcolm Browne, was one of the first images widely circulated by the American media about the conflict in Vietnam. After Duc willingly allowed gasoline to be poured all over his body, he sparked a match and engulfed himself in flames. As he was being burned alive, Duc continued to sit in the intersection, legs crossed while praying in front of hundreds of people. This image left an impression for whoever saw it, including President John F. Kennedy, who said, "No news picture in history has generated so much emotion around the world as that one." This moment ultimately led up to increased U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. According to a Gallup Poll in August 1965, only 24% of Americans thought that sending U.S. troops to Vietnam was a mistake. By January 1973 that percentage had risen to 60. What, over the course of those eight years, had changed so many minds? The lack of censorship may be part of the explanation. Whereas photographs and film footage of previous wars were scrutinized by American military officials, images of the conflict in Vietnam were not subject to censorship.

During World War II, all news regarding the war had to pass through the Office of War Information (OWI), which led to the majority of the news being positive and optimistic. Much different from the news that would be produced from Vietnam, soldiers who were drafted were not afraid to speak their minds about the war when a correspondent was around. Herr, the author of *Dispatches*, noted several times in his memoir that soldiers would often ask for him to properly show their



side of the story, and let their voices be heard.

In Vietnam, war correspondents were allowed access to the battlefield and frontlines with American and South Vietnamese troops, as they had done in previous wars. However, this time they were exposed to the treacherous Vietnam jungle and the NVA's unusual guerilla war tactics of ambushes and booby traps, resulting in gruesome deaths of soldiers. Due to the lack of American military censorship, war correspondents were allowed to report anything—besides confidential material—they saw and experienced in Vietnam. As a result, images proliferated across American media. Newspapers and magazines were constantly displaying the photographs produced in Vietnam. The combination of journalistic freedom and improving technology of the portable camera exposed the American people to the brutality of war for the first time in history. The public was enthralled with and yet disgusted by the photographs taken by correspondents. After a mission or action occurred and the correspondent had material, they would send it to either Saigon or back to the states, and shortly thereafter these images appeared on the cover of magazines such as *TIME* and *Life*.

Just as the American public was horrified by the Vietnam War, the same could be said about Marlow and his Congo River expedition from Joseph Conrad's novella, *Heart of Darkness*. The story concerns a European seaman sent on a job to find the elusive Mr. Kurtz far along the Congo River for the Belgium Trading Company. Marlow was just as fascinated by the "savages" of Africa as the American public was intrigued by the Vietnam War:

...In some inland post feel the savagery, the utter savagery, had closed round him—all that mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men. There's no initiation either into such mysteries. He has to live in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is detestable. And it has a fascination, too, which goes to work upon him. The fascination of the abomination—you know. Imagine the growing regrets, the longing to escape, the powerless disgust, the surrender, the hate. (Conrad 4)

This passage could also represent the same feelings that Herr had during his time as a correspondent when he explains that "you know how it is, you want to look and you don't want to look" (18). It was the same fascination that drove both Marlow and Herr into places where very few dared to venture.

Across the country, people were exposed to images of the dead, many of whom had been brutally burned by Napalm attacks. Take for example Kim Phuc, a

nine-year-old girl in South Vietnam. The NVA had taken up residency in her village; as a result, American and South Vietnamese forces heavily bombed their location, leaving civilians caught in the middle. As Phuc and her family were fleeing, a pilot mistook them for a group of NVA soldiers. They dropped Napalm on the group, leaving Phuc with severe burns on her back, while also killing two of her family members and injuring several more. Associated Press photographer Nick Ut captured a photograph immediately after the incident and it demonstrates the brutality of the war on both the American and Vietnamese side. The image, titled “Accidental Napalm,” depicts five children, all under the age of ten, running in hysteria with their burning village in the background. Phuc, completely naked, is the focal point of the photograph; the mistakenly dropped Napalm had caught her clothes on fire, and she was forced to remove them. Napalm is designed to destroy every living thing it touches and it is a miracle Phuc was not burned alive.

The children in the photograph are noticed at first glance, however, I believe the seven American soldiers in the background of the photograph is where a great understanding of the cruelty of the war is found. With all of the children running in front of them, the soldiers appear to be casually walking down the road, none of them tending to the burned and bewildered children. One soldier on the far right is even lighting a cigarette, exemplifying that horrifying sights like this were a common occurrence for them. Napalm was used throughout the war and caused an extreme amount of damage to vegetation, buildings and humans. For the soldiers, it is just another day in Vietnam, counting down the months, days and hours until they are discharged. Ut’s iconic photograph allowed the American people an opportunity to connect with the children and soldiers emotionally: they could see the hysteria and pain in the children’s faces, but they could also see the apparent indifference of the soldiers. An American public who saw burned and bewildered children, all under the age of ten with no visible adult, made the public question whether the pain they inflicted was worth it. The calmness of the soldiers exemplifies the fact that sights like these were a common occurrence. Images such as “Napalm Girl” exposes the brutality that Vietnamese citizens faced everyday as a result of the war.

Photographs had the most important role in shaping the American people’s view on the war. Similarly, Benjamin once compared the power of painting to the power of film. Since he wrote in “The Work of Art and Mechanical Reproduction” in 1936, if we consider the advancement in technology since that time, photography is be a fair substitute for paintings in his argument. He explains how the “painting invites the spectator to contemplation; before it the spectator can abandon himself

to his associations. Before the movie frame he cannot do so. No sooner has his eye grasped a scene than it is already changed” (Benjamin, 304). Photographs that were displayed across the front pages of newspapers and magazines allowed the American people the opportunity to observe and take in everything in the photograph has to offer. The same cannot be accomplished through film; on the nightly news, the changing subjects constantly force one’s eye to look at a few pieces of the frame, not the entirety of it. The photograph Ut took allows for the spectator to observe and connect with everything the picture contains: the pure hysteria in the children and the pain in their faces contrasted with the stoic soldiers. The photograph allows the spectator to connect with the children and soldiers while also seeing the impact of American forces in Vietnam. It is pictures like this that surely shaped the image of the war for the American public and eroded public support of American involvement in Vietnam.

As photographs continued to surface from Vietnam, there were other images that made a lasting impression on the American people. For example, in a photograph taken in March 1968 by Army photographer Ronald Haeberle, he captured a disturbing image after what would later be dubbed the My Lai Massacre, which is often considered “the most shocking episode of the Vietnam War” (Greiner). American troops, led by First Lieutenant William Calley, raided a village where they expected to find North Vietnamese soldiers. However, they only found women, children and the elderly; the soldiers eventually killed hundreds of the unarmed citizens. The photograph published seven months later by *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* depicts several humans piled together as they lay dead. Women, children, and even infants, murdered on behalf of the United States Military.

Every aspect of this picture is disturbing: people partially clothed and piled up, and, at the very top of the image, a young boy motionless on his back by himself thirty yards away from the others. Herr describes a specific feeling in his memoir, and although he is not describing the My Lai Massacre, the comparison is still fitting. He says, “Brutality was just a word in my mouth before that. But disgust was only one color in the whole mandala, gentleness and pity were other colors, there wasn’t a color left out” (67). This is exactly the kind of photograph that eroded the American people’s threshold towards violence. When you see multiple innocent people dead, one is at a loss of words to describe such a horrid act. There is no explanation, just more questions if America should be involved in this conflict. The photographs exemplified Vietnam as a living hell not only for soldiers, but also for civilians.

Herr was a reporter and U.S. war correspondent for *Esquire* magazine in Vietnam from 1967–69, eight years later he published his memoir, *Dispatches*. His writing described everyday life and encounters with individuals along with a description of the horrifying sights, smells and stories he experienced during his tenure in Vietnam. He explains his experience that “I went to cover the war and the war covered me” (20). During his time in Vietnam, Herr was a reporter, not a photographer, and although he did not produce the photographs that would eventually change the American peoples view on the war, he gives insight to everyday life of soldiers and what they had to experience first hand through articles such as *Hell Sucks*, published in 1968. Not only his writing for *Esquire* magazine during the war but his post-war writing for *Dispatches* mimics what the American people felt as well: pure disgust by the sights and sounds around him yet, at the same time, intrigued by the people he met and the stories they told.

Herr gives insight on how print journalism and radio broadcast were ineffective in conveying what was actually happening in Vietnam due to a type of ‘censorship’ the military used during briefings to correspondents,

All in-country briefings, at whatever level, came to sound like a Naming of the Parts, and the language was used as a cosmetic, but one that diminished beauty. Since most of the journalism from the war was framed in that language or proceeded from the view of the war which those terms implied, it would be as impossible to know what Vietnam looked like from reading most newspaper stories as it would be to know how it smelled. (92–93)

Just as, during World War II, the OWI censored the news regarding the war, the military in Vietnam used language that made it hard to comprehend what was actually happening on the ground. Although Americans received daily briefings from newspaper and radio, they simply could not comprehend what was happening in Vietnam based off of reading and listening alone. That is why photographs were crucial to breaking the threshold Americans had towards violence; there was no way for the American military to hide or manipulate what was produced in a photograph. The real, uncensored images allowed the public an opportunity to connect with others emotions and eventually lead to the overwhelming diminishing support of the Vietnam War.

As a result of the images from Vietnam, back in the states groups were beginning to organize and protest the war. Demonstrations broke out across the nation including the University of Oregon, but the most memorable was the rally

at Kent State University. In May 1970, the Ohio National Guard open fired on a group of students, leaving four dead and nine wounded. Student photographer, John Filo, captured an important image during the shooting. It depicts a girl on her knees leaning over a dead body. She is screaming and looks distraught as the others around her are in disbelief. This tragedy was later named the Kent State massacre and is a turning point in the war: the killing was not only taking place in Vietnam anymore, but it was now happening in the states. American people began taking a stand, demanding that the U.S. government needed to be uninvolved in Vietnam. Just as any major event in Vietnam was covered by the American media, the incident at Kent State was highly circulated, with public disapproval rising. The killing of four peaceful demonstrators on a college campus did not aide the military in their pursuit of defeating the North Vietnamese army.

The Vietnam War was unique; it began as a conflict and slowly turned into a war, although it was never officially declared so by the U.S. government. It was broadcast unlike any other war in history, for the entire nation to see and then deemed a mistake as millions of people began to advocate for America to be uninvolved in Vietnam. But it was also unique because it was a daily topic; people read about it in the morning paper, talked about it at work and then watched updates on the television by night. Film was an important factor in shaping the public's disapproval of the war, but photography played an even more significant role. The nightly news broadcasts can be seen as more of a reality television show because it gave glimpses into what life was like in Vietnam. Photographs, however, captured moments. They allowed the spectator, primarily the American public, the opportunity to connect to individuals and truly dissect what was going on at the moment. Many publications raised a lot of questions, not only about whether the U.S. should be involved in Vietnam, but also about the ethics of the military. The publication of the photographs of *The Burning Monk*, *Accidental Napalm*, *My Lai Massacre* and the *Kent State Massacre* proved to be so influential that they initially led to President Kennedy increasing U.S. military engagement and then, several years later, led to demonstrations across the country as people began to feel more passionately about their beliefs towards the war.

It is in our nature as humans to be captivated by something unusual or even horrifying, that is the same reason a fictional Englishman traveled up the Congo river at the end of the 19th century, and a magazine writer chose to live in a war zone for two years. And it is the same reason the American people were intrigued yet horrified by the Vietnam War. It was simply "a fascination of the abomination."

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# MILES SHEPARD

Miles Shepard is a sophomore and a Comparative Literature major. He is interested in contemporary literary and film theory as well as aesthetics. He enjoys experimenting with photography and developing film. He believes that everyone should engage their voice in our democracy through voting and protest.

Mentor: **Emily Cole**

## LIMINAL THRESHOLDS IN *EL LABERINTO DEL FAUNO*

**THE ENDING OF GUILLERMO DEL TORO'S** *El Laberinto Del Fauno* is made known prior to the explanation of how it happened. *El Laberinto Del Fauno* or *Pan's Labyrinth* exists in a frozen narrative space, exploring the living intersections of medial thresholds, rather than leading to crescendo of plot from beginning to end. The narrative setting of the film, as told through the eyes of the losing side of a civil war, informs the liminality of the text as a whole. Although the beginning and end of the film are certainly not insignificant to an appreciation of the film, the investigation of what lies in between these allows for a greater discussion and judgment of the film's powerful implications of competing narrative perspectives. Essentially, in terms of plot construction, *El Laberinto Del Fauno* concerns a young girl moving to the Spanish countryside with her mother to be with her mother's new husband, Capitán Vidal. Vidal is a high-ranking general of the fascist army who hopes to depopulate the remnants of *los maquis* and extinguish their political ideology. With his militant timeliness, physical brutality, and opposition to Ofelia and her mother, he functions as the film's antagonist. While the film is closely linked to its historical background, a much greater emphasis is placed on Ofelia's interactions with the fantastic other world that only she can travel to and from.

While the film steers away from being about the struggles of *Los Maquis*, the rebels who continued to fight Francisco Franco after their defeat, in order to focus on the development of characters and competing realities, any analysis of the film should have its roots in the historical context where it is set. The opening screen

simply says, *cinco años después la paz*, “five years after the peace.” This peace refers to Spain shortly after its destructive civil war, which occurred between 1936 and 1939. After the defeat of Republican forces by the fascist regime, large numbers of leftist forces retreated into the woods outside large cities. Operating in remote locations, they hoped to live as openly as possible and continue to fight against the Franco dictatorship. While they were seldom able to wage traditional warfare they carried out many covert operations of sabotage as well as minor skirmishes. At some points, they posed a major threat to the forces of European fascism.

According to *Los Maquis Regresan Al Cine Español (Los Maquis Return To The Spanish Theater)*, in the period immediately following the Spanish Civil War many of Los Maquis were able to turn their attention to fascist forces in France and win some substantial victories. When they returned to Spain, the soldiers’ spirits were high; however, “In that crossroads of the advance of the victory of the allies, the picture quickly became completely different” (Heredero 160). A combination of the strength of the Nazis and the United States’ policy of isolationist abandonment quickly turned the high-water mark of *Los Maquis* into an era known for a gradual and slow defeat. Being that the film takes place in 1944, *El Laberinto Del Fauno* is set chronologically in a time where los maquis would have been losing their foothold in the countryside and posing a decreasing threat to the Franco regime.

Hindsight regret is an attitude often returned to in historical documentation of the militant groups living in the Spanish countryside. In his writings on *los maquis*, Carlos Heredero often laments, “at that time they did not know what we did today.” While their defeat represents an incalculable loss for democracy, *El Laberinto Del Fauno* takes what could be used as an opportunity to mourn and turns it into an opportunity to shed beauty on a historical period so marked by loss and tragedy. This is to suggest that the viewer can take what they already know about the historical outcomes of this period and use what might be painful knowledge to illustrate the beauty of the moments leading up to a tragic historical and narrative ending. From the beginning of the film, there are no illusions about the endings of both individual characters and the sociopolitical movements they represent. To put it simply, the bulk of the story instead lies in what happens before the ending.

Resisting traditional cinematic form, the end of *El Laberinto Del Fauno* is revealed to the viewer before any other information about the film’s narrative world. The first cut of the film is Ofelia’s death presented in reverse, with blood trickling from her mouth back into her nose and life visibly coming back to her body. After a few moments, her breath catches and the screen fades to black, accompanied with



the sounds of calm respiration. The jarring image of life re-entering her body is followed with a major shift in temporal space. Out of the black screen, a narrator reads a folktale that seems to bring us from the very ending of the film to a time before the beginning of the film:

Many years ago, in the underworld where there is no pain or death, there lived a princess who dreamt of the human world. She had dreamt of the blue sky, the gentle breeze, and the brilliant sun. One day, mocking her keepers, the princess ran away. In the outside world, over many years the light of the sun degraded her memory. The princess forgot who she was, where she came from. Her body suffered cold, sickness, and pain, and after running for many years, died.<sup>1</sup>

This is the first point of the film where the ambiguity of Ofelia's identity is brought up, a theme that is foregrounded throughout the film. By offering competing visual suggestions and character perspectives, a simple explanation of her origin is often intentionally obscured, forcing the audience to continually guess.

The competing dual perspectives of the film are found in the first tonal montage, right after Ofelia's death scene. During the narrative monologue, the audience sees an otherworldly, archaic Spanish architectural site occupying a horizontal axis, a barricade of uniform black cars driving toward a labyrinth, Ofelia's hands holding a book with the image of a silhouetted girl who is similar to Ofelia in appearance, surrounded by fairies similar in appearance to the ones she will meet. Ofelia's mother says to Ofelia, "you shouldn't read these books in the fresh air of the country." Already, the camera transforms the screen into a site of perceptual struggle, a motif that becomes a main theme throughout the film. On one hand, the narration of Ofelia's story of origin and the aligning visual screen composed of horizontal ruinous imagery presents one thread of perspective. Because of the screen of text informing the audience that the film is in Spain, the suggestion is made that Ofelia is a lost princess and in Spain. The continuity of the montage from this idiosyncratic angle is first interrupted by the cars vertically cutting the landscape illustrated in the prior scene. In doing this, the viewer is made aware not only of who Ofelia claims to be, but it also positions the vertically signified militant force as optically resistant to the horizontal narrative of divinity. When Ofelia's mother tells her not to read the story from which the horizontal narration is constructed, the viewer is already led to question the validity of her perception.

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<sup>1</sup> All translations of the Spanish text are the author's.

By the time Ofelia's car pulls over, there is a fully functional multiplicity of realities. Ofelia's pregnant mother is getting out of the car to catch a breath of fresh air after feeling sick. Meanwhile, Ofelia is following an insect to a broken statue off the path. What appears at first to be a simple insect quickly anthropomorphizes into something that seems to have intentions to lead Ofelia. After showing her a statue of an eye hidden in the woods near the car, it flies away and follows the path, returning to the form of a normal dragonfly. In the portrayal of the insect as being both normal and fantastic, the viewer is led to embrace the viability that Ofelia is both a princess from the underworld lost in Spain, but at the same time not a princess from the underworld lost in Spain. Without giving much hard evidence to support either claim, much like the fascist occupied land itself, the screen becomes a space of back and forth skirmish and negotiation that ultimately serves to leave the audience with discussion for questions involving textual truth, justice, and identity. Whereas more traditional cinematic discourse relies on the passive observer, the lack of clarity and direction in the film on such issues as what appears to be real but is not, or what appears to be the truth but is fantasy encourages the viewer to take a position of active participation.

Most of the time spent exploring the historical background is in its linkage to Ofelia's perception. This is to say that when all is going according to plan for Ofelia, all goes according to plan for the rebels. Early in the film, Ofelia meets the Faun, who informs her that she is the queen of the underworld and must complete a series of three tasks before the full moon in order to return to her rightful throne. The first task is relatively harmless: to retrieve a key from a frog living underneath a tree in the forest. During this period, Ofelia's mother's health improves and Mercedes, a double agent in the employ of Vidal but ultimately working against him, is able to sneak medicine and supplies to the rebel lines. By contrast, the second task is much more perilous: to resist the temptation of an irresistible feast. After failing the second task and nearly being consumed by a monster with eyes on his hands, the situation for the rebels and for Ofelia begins to deteriorate. Ofelia loses her mother, who dies in childbirth, and Vidal's bloodthirsty purges within his own ranks become increasingly more destructive. The rebel's assault on the fascist forces culminates with Ofelia being shot and murdered by Capitán Vidal, which takes the viewer to the first scene shown in the film.

The final shots of the film offer a deeper view of the initial shocking image of Ofelia dying. As Ofelia lies on the ground bleeding, we see her being cradled by Mercedes with a full moon in the background, indicating that this is the final task.

Ofelia transcends to her kingdom in heaven and sees her father and mother on high thrones. The visual elements of this scene are part of its significance. Whereas most of the film is shot in overcast weather, with mostly gray, black, and brown toned images, the final shots are of the throne room filled with gold. Much like the film's discussion of truth and justice, the final lines of the film offer an explanation that could serve several different interpretations. The Faun informs Ofelia that "the portal will only open if we sacrifice the blood of an innocent." Even when the Faun pressures her: "You would give up your sacred rights for this brat who you hardly know? You would give up your throne to him?" Her father says: "You have spilled your own blood rather than that of an innocent. That was the final task, and the most important." Indeed, Ofelia was very willing to put her interpretations and perceptions of the world before everybody around her; in some situations even prompting her mother's wrath in doing so. An implication with much more weight and credit to Ofelia, however, is that her commitment to morality is her saving grace. Many characters in the film are quick to point out Ofelia's tendency to take fairytales seriously. Most notable among these characters is Capitán Vidal, who goes so far as to suggest she allows it to dictate the way she makes decisions. In reality, Ofelia is committed ultimately to what she feels is right. If she were truly at the command of her fantasies, she would have chosen to sacrifice her brother in order to fulfill them. Instead, she puts the life of an infant before her transcendence to her home.

One of the most powerful thematic tools used in the film to escalate the friction between narrative threads is the preference of general suggestion over definitive explanation, which does the most work in constructing the atmosphere that puts pressure on the audience to make decisions about the text, rather than the characters or text speaking directly to what the viewer should take away. Generally speaking, the story shown on the screen offers different intersecting truths. While there are several places in *El Laberinto Del Fauno* where Ofelia is explicitly told she is crazy, there still persists a willingness to believe in her that has much more weight than simply offering her the benefit of the doubt or the suspension of disbelief. While the montage that connects the book to Ofelia, and to her narrative on a larger scale is so seamless that it appears to be a statement of the truth, as the film progresses it reveals itself more as a suggestion of one possible explanation. By slowly chipping away at this truth, the text posits itself against its characters. In this way, the text itself wants the viewer to believe that there exists a line of reality, or truth, between the monologue, the book, and Ofelia.

While the text urges the viewer to draw this conclusion, the characters around her offer different implications of her origin. Their interpretations of Ofelia's perceptions might suggest the possibility that the narrative was actually the contents of the book she read in the car. With this lens, Ofelia is confusing the world around her with the world of fiction. This very literal interpretation sheds some light on the book Ofelia receives that reveals the tasks she needs to do to return to heaven. If she already has blurred the lines between her book of fairytales and her own life, would it not make sense that she might think an empty notebook is an instruction manual on how to return to another world? Rather than giving an outright answer to these questions, *El Laberinto Del Fauno* presents different strategies of analyzing the complex problems discussed within it. In purposefully confusing these narrative lines, the viewer is able to take on a greater variety of lenses with which they can see where each character comes from in their thoughts and actions.

The text positions many of the characters on a scale of their liminality, or in-between-ness, with Ofelia cast as the only character who is known to be able to consciously travel between the two realities portrayed by the text. This is to say that much of how the audience judges the characters is based on their relationship to Ofelia in terms of their belief or disbelief. The tendency of characters to completely trust her actions, dismiss her peculiarity as a girl clinging to childhood, or outright rejecting her perception places them on a kind of scale through which the viewer can draw their own conclusion. By showing these characters as a spectrum, rather than a binary, *El Laberinto Del Fauno* essentially casts away the possibility that any of them are completely wrong or completely right in their considerations of Ofelia.

Some of Ofelia's non-believers seem to be cast in a light of benign misunderstanding rather than vindictiveness. For example, Ofelia's mother gently urges her to put her books away and focus on enjoying the fresh air of the countryside. In a scene where the cold vastness of the house keeps Ofelia from falling asleep, her mother uses disbelief to comfort her. Her mother asks her if she is afraid, and when Ofelia nods she responds: "it's just the wind. Nights here are different from nights in the city. There you hear cars, trains. Here the houses are old: they creak, like they are speaking." When we later see the monsters that Ofelia comes into contact with, it casts a kind of irony on statements like this coming from her mother: how could she be so foolish as to think it really is just the wind? But at the same time, there is nothing necessarily wrong with what she is telling Ofelia. Even if she does not believe in the other world, she is only trying to do her best to comfort Ofelia in the turbulent move from the city to the countryside. Furthermore, any child might

think the lifelike creaks of an old house sound like the whispers of fairies, especially if they are constantly reading fairytales. In this situation, the difference of perspective is benign to Ofelia's quest, suggesting that she may just be overly imaginative.

The character with the most extreme position on this spectrum is Capitán Vidal, whose combative relationship with Ofelia goes so far as to suggest not only that everything Ofelia believes is false, but that thinking imaginatively in any way is dangerous. When Ofelia's mother becomes sick in her pregnancy, the faun offers Ofelia a mandrake root to be fed milk and drops of blood. The magic takes the form of a mandrake root, "a root that dreamt of being man." It appears to mirror the development of her unborn brother; as she sings to it and gives drops of blood and milk to the plant, her brother, and by extension her mother's, health improves. Shortly after matters for the rebels and Ofelia start to appear dire, Ofelia's mother's health begins to decline. Coinciding with her declining health, Mercedes' brother is executed, resulting in her own identity as a double agent for *Los Maquis* close to being blown. Vidal takes the mandrake root out from underneath his wife's bed and the audience sees it has become a grotesque image of rotting milk and dried blood. He then makes a statement packed with a great deal of significance to the text: "all of this is happening because of that garbage you let her read." It is viable that *all this* simply refers to his son and wife's health, but the greater implication seems to be that his general misfortune is stemming from Ofelia's reading of fairytales. Vidal's portrayal as antagonist to Ofelia is constructed not only through his ruthlessness, but also in his militant stance against her perspective and story. Underneath his outward willingness to manipulate, belittle Ofelia and his wife, and kill for sport is an intrinsic commitment to rejecting a fantastic reality. While this is most obviously a reference to the censorship and rejection of alternative ideas under the Franco regime, the villainous portrayal of Vidal carries a special meaning to Ofelia, the text, and the viewer's understanding of it.

We are introduced to Ofelia as being a princess who has forgotten who she truly is and accompany her on her journey to return to her true self. When the rebels succeed in recapturing Vidal's fort, Vidal surrenders his child and requests they tell his son what time his father died. Mercedes responds, "he won't even know your name." Here, the formal focus on what lies between the beginning and the end sews the stitches between the two. Like Ofelia, Ofelia's brother will not know his origins. Here we see that judgment, on many levels, reveals itself as one of the most important subjects explored in the world of *El Laberinto Del Fauno*, or *Pan's Labyrinth*. The audience is in the unique position of being able to watch the film's characters draw

inferences from the world around them as it is set in history, and is able to observe the way they pass judgments on one another. The experience of viewing the film becomes one of active thinking and judgment making, rather than passive observation. The in betweens explored in the film manifest themselves largely in the form of historical context, alternating perceptions, and the journey of Ofelia. By actively watching Ofelia retrace her steps to the underworld, the audience is able to focus on the fleeting moments that take her there. To cast light on these liminal thresholds is to give a unique chance to listen to the voices that are not always heard, and the narratives that are so often cast aside.

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# LEAH FILLOY TROPER

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## SKATEBOARDING ACROSS THRESHOLDS

**THE 1970S REPRESENT A PERFECT SNAPSHOT** of the wild, frenetic energy that emerged from the beginning of the skateboarding culture. It all started when Southern California began experiencing a serious drought, leaving a surplus of empty pools that became the so called “playgrounds” for the kids and teenagers that were in search of a new state of mind. The streets were filled with an incoming wave of wiry teens showing off their Bjorn Borg hair, tube socks, knee pads and golden tanned skin. It was an era when experimentation was prominent and defiance against authority ruled over order, law and statue. Photographer Hugh Holland was 32 when he first started taking photographs of skateboarders descending from the hills, boardwalks, empty pools, and parking lots of California. “Skateboarding was and is all about style, and the stylishness was incredible as they performed a kind of ballet on concrete,” said Holland once during an interview with LAist Magazine. He focused on accentuating the lust and adoration the 13 to 19 year old teenagers had for the sport; the pools were filled with all kinds of kids from different neighbourhoods and backgrounds drawn together by passion and love of experimentation. Hugh Holland is able to portray the youth culture during the late 70s through his photographs in his book *Locals Only: California Skateboarding 1975– 1978*. The specific wide lens he uses to take the pictures as well as the

realism method applied helps to represent the true image of the youth culture as dramatic and sincere; the scrapes and dirty feet, risk and getting to know gravity in a very personal way was all part of the picture. Holland expresses the liberalism, experimentation, and fashion of the era in several of his images by focusing on the aesthetics of the human body as free, self-determine, unrestrained and liberal, but at the same time imperfect.

*Locals Only: California Skateboarding 1975–1978* is a representation of what made up the youth culture; a kid might have been on his most awkward stage of adolescence, but when he was rolling on his skateboard he was flawless. Garance Doré, a French photographer, illustrator and author, wrote about her impression of Hugh Holland's photographs and how it related to her own experience: "When they weren't rolling at high-speeds, you had the time to realize that their voices were still squeaky and they were as pimply as every teenager. But that's why I gasped when I saw these photos. Skateboarding, it's so beautiful." Hugh Holland is able to bring nostalgia through his photographs and keeps the audience daydreaming about the past: endless summers, free living, youth and contentment. He shot the photographs with old color negative movie film, delivering his images in warm, soft tones that were in complete contrast to the sharp, edgy look the skateboards were trying to pursue. Holland focused his photographs on the skateboarders in motion, but beyond that, he tried to represent the entirety of the alluring lifestyle. Holland captures aesthetically warm and profound portraits of the young boys observing and waiting for their turn or in peaceful contemplation after a long day of riding. The photographs are primarily shot in the late afternoon, when the sun is coming down, bathing the teens and environment with an effervescent, glistening quality.

Hugh Holland experiments with a Canon Pentax 17mm lens. This specific lens used to photograph the skateboarders was a wide-angle lens, also known as "fisheye" lens. This wide angle made the photographs look bigger and spacious; it added a hint of drama, which was a key aspect of skateboarding. The ultra-wide lens required Holland to get a very close approach of the skateboarders in order to obtain the perfect image. He would usually do a lot of close-ups right under, on top of the skateboarders and at the peak of their trajectory in order to capture the ultimate view of the scene. Holland retains memories of the afternoons and days spent with the boys, the "squad," and what it felt like to be under the skateboarders taking shots; he was able to experience the power and thrill emerging from the teenagers' bodies into the ambience: "Lying on my back many times at the bottom of an empty



pool while wild skaters caught the air above me, and stray boards whizzed over my head. And me without a helmet!” (*LAist*).

In the inside back cover photograph of the book: *Stacy Peralta, Coldwater Canyon, June 1977*, Hugh Holland is able to portray the California skateboarding culture through the aesthetics present in the image. Every aspect of the photograph comes together in perfect harmony: colors, textures, movement, angle and lighting. It is evident from what the photograph shows that the group of skateboarders are showing off their skills in an empty pool. The stairs in the upper left corner as well as the ones behind Stacy Peralta, call out that the setting is indeed an empty pool, which was a very common spot during the late 70s in California (due to the drought) to practice the sport. The pool has several lighter and darker stains that give a grainy and edgy look to the photograph as well as the skateboarder, achieving a more dramatic outcome. Holland approaches the photograph with a perfect angle where every crucial detail is visible. There is a centric ray in the image that focuses on recreating a theatrical element of advertency in the viewer. Stacy, is in the centre of the photograph in order to drive the eye directly to the skateboarder, and yet the photograph is taken in such a way that it delineates the grandness of the pool, the spectators, the blue sky in the left top corner and the rays of sunshine entering from behind the houses. Holland makes use of the earthy color palette of the setting in perfect contrast with the shiny red color present in Stacy’s clothes as well as other clothing items from the rest of the skateboarders who are watching. It is appealing to the eye and it highlights Stacy, making him look ambitious and under the spot light. His golden colored skin as well as his long blonde hair, not only represent the fashion stamped in the youth culture of skateboarding, but it also acknowledges this specific era as a vivid, radiant and sunny time for the youngsters.

The photograph conveys a sense of realism since Holland does not take over the image, but instead lets it flow naturally as the skaters give turns to each other to do their thing. Stacy’s hands and hair impart movement, which reveals the fact that Holland is inside and in full view of the action. Holland is right on point when it comes to portray the skateboarding culture in California. The elbow pads, the knee pads, the short shorts and long socks represent the essences of style in 1977. He is able to show key aspects in the process of the skateboarding timeline. *Stacy Peralta, Coldwater Canyon, June 1977*, depicts the true substance of youth freedom in the 70s.

Hugh Holland focused on achieving a certain style of photograph in order to create a similar pattern between all his collection. It seems as if his main objective

of his work was to save the image and essence of the California skaters during the late 70s, but by doing that he went beyond expectations and portrayed the fashion statement as well as the drug culture that was extremely present during the era. In his book, *Locals Only: California Skateboarding 1975–1978*, Holland binds together four of his photographs in order to create a single picture that represents a common formality made out of similar habits and routines. *Photograph 34 (Top): Monte Vallier, Orange Bowl, San Francisco Bay, 1977*, takes setting in an another empty pool where the only visible objects are the kids skating and the trees behind them. Holland uses very warm colors in order to accentuate the familiar, intimate and relaxed surroundings as well as the experimentation vibes that persisted in the groups of teenagers. It seems like the photograph was taken in a sunny perfect day in accordance to the clothing used by the kid: Vans shoes, long socks with stripes, short shorts, kneepads, elbow pads and a simple t-shirt. *Photograph 34 (Bottom): “Stacy Peralta in the Valley,” Stacy Peralta, Coldwater canyon, June 1977*, shows again a portrait of the famous skater, widely known during the late 70s, Stacy Peralta skateboarding. Holland once again searches for the same color palette as the other photographs, and continues to use the beautiful mood created by the sunny days in California in order to add a sense of serenity; he is able to show the body movement of the skater by taking natural snapshots of the teenagers skateboarding instead of planning ahead what their movements should look like and in effect creating spontaneous and impromptu images of the skaters, dominant in the 70s. As well as in the other photograph Stacy is wearing similar clothes: the Vans shoes, long socks, short shorts, kneepads, elbow pads and this time no t-shirt, which Holland applies a lot in many of his photographs in order to delicately delineate the muscular bodies. *Photograph 35 (Top): “On the Rocks at Arthur’s Pool,” Nelsen Valentine, Author’s Pool, Santa Monica, October 1976*, takes place in an empty pool like the rest of the photographs coming together to form the single image. The warm colors, the blue sky and the sun shining in their glistening bodies gives the photograph the same effect present in Photographs 34 (Top and Bottom). The rays of sun makes Nelsen Valentine’s skin have a golden-like color as well as his hair, which was a very common trait between skateboarders. The fashion is on point: Vans shoes, long socks with stripes, short shorts and again no t-shirt, it is also evident in the photograph that all the other teenager and kids watching Valentine skate, are using vans and some are using shorts. The clothing was clearly a big part of skateboarding in California, a uniform that called out “I am a skateboarder!” Finally, *Photograph 35 (Bottom): Eric Capers, August 1977* Holland drifts from the warm cosy colors to a colder, lighter

palette, in effect, it contrasts with the bronzed skateboarder and the orange leaves from the left top corner tree. Capers as well as all the other skateboarders introduced in the photographs from page 34 and 35, keeps the fashion statement going. In this photograph it is very important to consider the graffiti made on the wall of the empty swimming pool: “Smoke” and “SKATES TOWN”; it emphasises the relevance of power and influence the skaters had in California amongst the rest of the citizens, it was celebrated and paramount of the 70s, as well as the drug culture that was massive around the youngsters. The fashion statement the skateboarders ruled with authenticity became a huge deal during the 70s around the world, it started as a very California skater/ surfer look that ended up in the streets and displayed in the shop windows. Holland takes advantage of the beauty and freshness the teenagers portray while skateboarding in order to increase the “likeness” and popularity the skateboarders could have gotten during the time the photographs were taken. The movement used to create balance and a smooth ride renders a detailed image of their muscles and fit bodies, it redefines them as not teenagers going through puberty and weird stages, but as skateboarders showing off their skills and beauty.

Hugh Holland is able to portray the 70s through the photographs in his book *Locals Only: California Skateboarding 1975–1978*, by accentuating the colors of the environment that surround the skateboarders as well as the clothes they are wearing. He uses a wide lens angle in order to capture the skaters and the whole scene as well as their confidence when riding the concrete waves. At the same time, he is able to encapsulate everything that takes part in the creation of the ‘brotherhood’ that skateboarding created. Holland produces images that are able to show the the essence of the 70s: the fashion, the drug culture, the libertinism, the experimentation of self-knowledge and substances, everything about these pictures take the viewers back to the past and they connect with the passion that the skateboards had for their hobby and sport. It is a lifestyle, a fashion statement, a moment of rejuvenation, a flashback to knee-top socks and small colored shorts that allow the viewer to appreciate the works of art. There is no comparison between the kids and teenagers that are portrayed in the images, they all come together as one person who is represented by passion, effort and admiration for their craze of the moment. Holland becomes part of this “crew” of skateboards and is able not only to grasp their smooth moves and fluent shifts, but he is also permitted inside their usual daily life and manages to reproduce in his photographs the youth culture that predominated during the late 70s.

Hugh Holland is one of many photographers who has focused on capturing

the aesthetics of this sport as well as its architecture and consistency. Another artist created similar photographs to Holland's was Craig Fineman, born in 1961 in Rushville Indiana. Although Fineman may be less known and not as famous as Hugh Holland, he pursued the same path and collected several images of skateboarders in the late 70s, later put together in his book *Pools*.

Craig Fineman didn't start as a photographer, he was actually one of many teenagers experiencing the new fashion of skateboarding in the waves of the concrete bowls of California. In 1973 he got his first skateboard and ever since became a passionate and affectionate skateboarder like many other boys of the time, but it was until 1975 when he started skating seriously with his group of friends. Fineman stopped skateboarding and began his career as a photographer. *Pools* is one of his best works because it is a time capsule that will indulge the viewers with nostalgia and sentimentality of the passing of time, taking them back to the late 1970s. Holland's and Fineman's photographs are very similar in style and context, but the difference between both of them is that Fineman suggests another point of view than Holland; this is said very clearly by Collector Daily, a venue for thoughtful discussion of vintage and contemporary fine art and photography, "They aren't about attitude, or swagger, or roughness, or trick making one-upsmanship. Instead, they turn the gravity defying moves of these athletes into a kind of stop motion ballet, following the flowing momentum of arms and legs across curved expanses of smooth concrete and then freezing the action at moments of grace and power." In other words, his photographs show another side of skateboarding; they portray a sense of fineness, elegance, grace and allude to the aesthetics of photography and the human body instead of focusing to achieve images that represent the youth culture during the 70s. Fineman, just like Holland, captured a moving image of one of the skateboarders. His long hair, golden-tan skin, toned body, short shorts and Vans represent the fashion statement during the era and what was common within skateboarders. Fineman photographed the skaters during broad daylight in order to capture the shadows of their bodies in motion; this is one of the aspects that makes the photographs look so peaceful and idyllic. The photographs in *Pools* are all in a black and white color pallet, lacking the presence of bright colors and portraying the atmosphere, environment and surroundings as unessential and absolutely subservient to the main object. It seems as if the target that Fineman was trying to execute was to show the skater in his own world and mind, almost as if the viewers could see and understand the feelings they might have felt when skating: freedom, peace, adrenaline, harmony and rhythm are present thanks to the elegance and

artistic touch they convey. In this photograph the details of the teenager's body and muscles are accentuated by the contrast of black and white lighting and shadows, and like Holland's photographs, it is clearly that they perform their skills in an empty pool, a setting that was very common during the late 70s to skate due to the California drought. In this photograph, face of the skater is not turned towards the viewers, but the fact that he is looking down and the way his body is placed gives the viewer a sensation of a serene and relaxed composition. All the photographs in the book are arranged vertically, in effect adding more visual drama to the scenes. The photograph was taken from a lower angle from where the skater was standing, Fineman liked to positioned himself at the bottom of the pool looking up at his subjects, creating a perception of grandness and power exerting from the skater. In many other photographs there is another photographer taking pictures from a different angle, Fineman captures both the photographer and the skater, in effect making it look professional and somewhat advanced for the time in which the photographs were taken.

Craig Fineman planned the photo shoot ahead, he took the photographs all in the same day with help from his crew, it was not spontaneous in any way. In the photograph, Fineman captures a shot of the skateboarder from behind, his long blonde hair is flowing with the wind, his body is toned and charged with energy and his short shorts ripped, which give the picture an edgy look. In the background, Fineman's crew is visible as well as the other skaters that are waiting to take their turn in the kidney looking pool. The photographs are able to exhibit the bodies and movements of the skaters; it is valid to say that Fineman was probably searching to reveal the aesthetics and the beauty of the sport instead of the culture, practices and beliefs the teenagers adopted. Although Fineman didn't have an idea of what he would later do with this photographs, it seems as if all the setting and organization of the photo shoot was indeed made specifically for an exhibition or a project. This photographs didn't travel much in society, and were not truly observed and acknowledged until the book *Pools* was published in 2012, exactly the same as Holland and his photographs.

Both Hugh Holland's and Craig Fineman's photographs are very similar in the sense that they both show the same type of teenagers (California skateboarders): dressed with the same clothes, similar hairstyles, golden-tanned skin, empty pools as a predominant setting, and both used the combination and contrasts of shades of color, either in color or in black and white, in order lit up and give life to the photographs and make them shine. Interestingly, the photographs are very similar

and both photographers took their pictures around the same time, but Holland's photographs in his book *Locals Only: California Skateboarding 1975–1978*, are able to tell a story and portray in depth the youth culture in the 70s more suitable and appropriate than Fineman's photographs. The fact that the photographs in Fineman's book *Pools* shows the "pretty" side of skateboarding and were taken in a different environment than Holland's, they are not able to convey the true essence of the culture the youngsters were living and experiencing as well as their emotions and their eagerness to "be out there" in their every day lives. Holland's photographs are not only striking with life and color, but they were never planned ahead, they were spontaneous and they reflected a true image of what skateboarding was and meant for teenagers in California. For this reason, although Fineman's photographs are strikingly beautiful, professional and artistic, they do not complete the job of portraying what the late 70's looked like.

"The way some people used some drugs in the Sixties era facilitated their purposeful exit from the rules and regulations that made up the culture they had been poised to inhabit." "Whether mellowed out on Valium, hyped up on speed, socially drunk, or gently buzzed on nicotine, Americans in the 1960s had seemingly accepted the intoxicated state as part and parcel of the American way of life." Both of these statements were written in the book *Imagine Nation, The American Counterculture of The 1960s and 70s* by Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle. Both quotes explain how the youth culture was affected by a sense of experimentation and wanting to "break the rules," in effect searching for drugs and the effects they produced in the body and mind in order to deal with everyday life and as an aid in the search of happiness. Both authors explain in detail and describe how drugs came to life in the 1960s and how they travelled all the way to 1970s; it became a social activity in the youth population, and a lot of this behavior started in the streets of San Francisco, California. "Criminalization made LSD use both more dangerous (impure "street" acid /jail time) and more a clear sign of cultural rebellion." Just by using any drug, an individual was declaring him or herself against the status quo of society, laws and the government. Young people were out there searching for the true meaning of life, experiencing new and unknown substances that produced new feelings; this was all part of a revolution undergoing in America. The Vietnam War, in 1955 to 1975, introduced to society new ideas and emotions that were floating around the American citizens, fighting for freedom, peace and change was a huge part of the youth culture. "The very act of dropping acid, authorities and parents said, was in and of itself a verification that one was a member

of something called “the counterculture.” In this quote the word counterculture is introduced, and it was a significant term during the 60s and 70s because it was extremely present in society and it was constantly applied to citizens’ actions. Counterculture refers to a set of attitudes and behaviors that contradict or oppose to the norms, laws and rules implemented by society in general and by people of higher power and rank (government, police, politicians etc.). The urge of experimentation was current, and people were starting to fight in favor of their rights and against the authorities. “The hallucinogenic age, while tamed in some respects, has survived and mutated and reproduced.” This statement is true and is still happening in the youth cultures of nowadays and it certainly passed from one era to another, from the 1960s into the 1970s. “The image of rampaging, youth who rejected the values of their parents and surrogate parents (Lyndon Johnson, university administrators), vowed never to trust anyone over thirty, and hoped to die before they got old has become a deeply entrenched cliché.” Indeed, the youth culture then and now seeks to live to the fullest. This was a huge conduct that was becoming famous and known around the youngsters of the time, they had never felt more alive.

Hugh Holland’s photographs are able to show the real image of what the youth culture in the late 70’s was experiencing. His photographs show spontaneity and actions of experimentation in teenagers trying to find their true selves in skateboarding. Experimentation went hand-in-hand with the beginning of the era of skateboarding; teenagers expressed a concern of finding passion and adrenaline in their heartfelt hobby, hence the upgrade of street skating into the empty pools, nowadays skating bowls. New fashion, new skateboards, new style, new friends, new squad, “new everything,” was all a part of this brilliant new leisure. Looking for different places to show off their moves, taking their bodies to the next level in order to achieve a not-yet-done trick, breaking rules and disobedience was all a part of this state-of-the-art “trend” that was predominating in California among the youths. Drugs, alcohol, sex, music and fashion came in collaboration with this venture that was emerging with popularity. Holland’s photographs illustrate, without explicitly showing the teenagers using illegal substances, the hunger the teenagers had of coming across new possibilities. The 1960s created a wall and separation between the youths and the adults, and reached its peak in the 1970s when teenagers were ready to absorb all of life’s pleasures. The photographs from Holland’s book *Locals Only: California Skateboarding 1975–1978*, convey a sense of innovation in which the pre-adolescents were immersed in, a fantasy life were skateboarding was all they needed to know and all they knew on earth. They not only present the

sport of skateboarding and the culture behind it, but they also acknowledge the brotherhood and passion for each other and for being young. The youth culture in the late 70s experienced a feeling of letting go and getting lost in the paths of life in able to shine and outstand the obstacles of growing up was the philosophy of the youth culture and they took it everywhere they went, just like the skaters never forgot their skateboard and their courage. Hugh Holland finds a way to portray in his photographs a detailed image of the 70s and how the teenagers allowed acceptance and freedom to take over their instinct, in effect creating this period of time when everything was permitted and people were keen of experimentation. The desire to grasp and absorb life's infinite opportunities was the main goal the youths were searching for in the 1970s.

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