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Trick

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Journal of Undergraduate Writing
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Jackson Voelkel

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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Trick. This year's *NOMAD* theme lends itself willingly to no small number of double entendres, puns, and associations. It is a playful yet generative theme, one that provided a variety of opportunities for not only frolic but also sober contemplation throughout the speaker series that ran in concert with the *NO-MAD* programming. To name a few highlights, our speaker series featured visits from a sneaky noir fiction writer (Jon Segura), a nearly fanatical expert in subversive graffiti and street art (Brian Knowles), and an experimental musician and digital performance artist (Tender Forever/Melanie Valera). Against this backdrop of spirited, artful and sometimes crafty scholarship, our undergraduate writers formed their outstanding essays. I can, utterly without any sort of foxy calculation, declare my sincere pride in the ten essays that were selected for this edition of *NOMAD*.

As they delved in to such thorny topics as apocalypse, clairvoyance, and social control, our writers demonstrated their serious literary clout as well as their creative wiles. So impressed was the editorial board by the caliber of this year's essays that we decided to recognize five of them as *NOMAD* Prize for Excellence in Scholarship winners, which ranged from the first place prize to three honorable mention recipients.

Many thanks are once again in order to the crew of tricksters who made this year's edition possible. I owe a debt of gratitude to Sunayani Bhattacharya and Mona Tougas, the wonderful and supremely dedicated mentorship coordinators who organized this year's mentors and mentees throughout the year. I'm deeply

grateful to Sharon Kaplan, who not only served as a mentor this year but who again worked to make our partnership with the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art a reality through their generous sponsorship of our undergraduate conference. Dr. Lisa Freinkel's vision not only for *NOMAD* but also for the comparative literature department in general has always been remarkable in its force and scope, and I am very thankful for her compassionate leadership. Finally no edition of *NOMAD* would be complete without superlative thanks to Cynthia Stockwell, who does more for *NOMAD* and for comparative literature at Oregon than anyone could possibly imagine.

AMANDA CORNWALL

JULIA VICKERS

Julia Vickers is a senior majoring in Dance and Comparative Literature. Her primary interests are the points where these fields overlap: performance studies, the relationship between movement and language, and the unique challenge of writing about dance.

NOMAD Prize for Excellence in Undergraduate Scholarship:

First Place Winner

Mentor: **Elena Villa**

OVERCOMING DUALISM:

READING BODIES AND WORDS IN
THE WORK OF BILL T. JONES

Our understanding of history consists, most often, of only the factual, objective statements of historians and textbooks. Affective, emotional content is considered to be a separate realm of information; its presence is not thought to be necessary, and it is often not included in traditional, verbal, historical records. Concert dance, on the other hand, is typically thought to be a medium concerned *only* with this affective, subjective, emotional level of

communication—it is thought to exist somehow outside of language, outside of the historical and the factual. This supposed separation, however, is not a hard truth, and when movement is supplemented with linguistic information, the dualistic thinking which keeps them apart can begin to be challenged. Bill T. Jones' 2009 work, *Fondly do we hope... Fervently do we pray*, presents a complex portrait of Abraham Lincoln, developed through both dance and language. A group of dancers are joined on stage, throughout the work, by a narrator, who accompanies their movements with spoken words. In some sections characters are clearly identified (Mary Todd Lincoln, Abraham Lincoln, etc.) and in others the dancers' presences are more abstract, but they are always juxtaposed with textual information referring back to Abraham Lincoln, or ideas evocative of him. We see moving bodies saying one thing and speaking bodies saying another, and are challenged to reconcile the two. The text does not simply narrate the content of the movement, and the movement does not pantomime the content of the text; their relationship is complex, and in some moments their layering is even counter-intuitive. The result is a communicative act which "tricks" audiences into depending equally on the literal content of verbal statements and the affective connotations of movement; it demonstrates the distance between the verbal and the physical, but ultimately brings them together. Jones "tricks" audiences into reading the dance through the words, and the words through the dance. His work complicates and ultimately overcomes the supposed separation between the physical and the verbal, the affective and the factual, presenting content dependent equally upon both.

Western philosophy has consistently placed the mind and body in opposition. Dualistic thinking saturates modern discourse

and society, creating many of the categorical distinctions we think of as inevitable or natural. Elizabeth Grosz' *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* reconstructs our understanding of the mind and body, seeking to reinsert the body into philosophical thinking. She explains that "philosophers have tended to ignore the body or to place it in the position of being somehow subordinate to and dependent for all that is interesting about it on animating intentions," ignoring or devaluing the significance of the corporeal in favor of the intellectual (vii). She argues, however, that the separation of the body and mind is only a theoretical one; bodies carry equal weight, communicate equally as much, and are an equally important aspect of subjectivity. Bodies, for Grosz, seem to be the missing link between "what is perceived as purely internal and accessible only to the subject and what is external and publicly observable, a point from which to rethink the opposition between the inside and the outside... and all the other binary pairs associated with the mind/body opposition" (20-21). When we begin to consider the significance of corporeality, we can begin to view subjectivity in a way unfettered by the binary. The body is the physical manifestation of the subject, the link between internal consciousness and external presence, and when it is considered as such, we become capable of taking advantage of its full range of expressive possibilities.

Moving past the limitations of the supposed separation between the mind and body allows the body to carry more meaning. When we acknowledge the importance of corporeality, it becomes possible to see its ability to communicate and, subsequently, to understand bodies the same way we understand text. Susan Leigh Foster argues that "reading" is an effective metaphor for the analysis of dance, and that "literacy in dance begins with seeing, hearing,

and feeling how the body moves” (58). In dance, as in language, meaning is created largely by the manipulation of “codes and conventions” which situate the content in relation to other works, and information that has come before, and through analysis of how they are functioning in a particular work, “the viewer comes to understand not only what that dance means but also how it creates meaning” (59). Bodies are capable of conveying meaning just as language is, and dance can be read just as language can.

While this is a helpful metaphor, and movement is a kind of language, physicality and bodily presence are a nonverbal form of communication. Dance can communicate as effectively as text, and can be understood using some of the same analytical strategies, but it presents its content through a different medium—the body. Bodies are inherently evocative and connotative, and they present affective information through their mere presence. André Lepecki’s *Of the Presence of the Body* questions the implications of bodies and the way they speak in dance. He argues that “the presence of the dancing body becomes a matter of delicate excavation, as a dancing body releases layers of memory-affects,” and that this presence “plunges it into the past, into history, into a representational field that is perhaps too excessive to be regimented, contained, tamed” (Lepecki 4-5). Viewing the body leads to “layers of memory-affects”; particular bodies can create a multitude of associations based solely on their presence. These associations are based in personal history and subjective experience, creating a range of possible meanings and connections which are rooted in subjectivity, and thus “too excessive” to be clearly defined.

Fondly do we hope... Fervently do we pray does not deny this distance between body-communication and language-communi-

cation. In fact, Jones’ staging of the work physicalizes the separation between text and movement. With the exception of one scene, all of the work’s text comes from one performer—the narrator. He is present on stage with the rest of the performers (the dancers), but his only role is to speak. His separation is emphasized by his costume, a tuxedo and a microphone—his formal clothes would not allow him the freedom to dance, and his microphone reminds us that his voice is his most important contribution to the performance. He often stands in an isolated area of the stage, in his own pool of light, which distinguishes his space from the space where the dance takes place. This separation demonstrates the distance between not only two different kinds of performer, but two different kinds of communication: the verbal and the physical.

The difference between these two types of communication can also be defined, in terms of linguistic philosophy, as a difference between two types of speech act. According to J.L. Austin, the two typically encountered types of speech act are the constative and the performative. A constative speech act is a statement, which does nothing but relay information. A performative speech act, on the other hand, is one which also performs an action. In speaking a performative, one is also “doing” it. For example, when the bride and groom say “I do” at a wedding, this utterance effectively is the act of marriage, not a description of it or a statement about it.

The verbal narration in *Fondly do we hope... Fervently do we pray* is composed entirely of constative speech acts. The text consists mostly of biographical information and historical facts. The narrator introduces characters—Abraham Lincoln, Mary Todd Lincoln, their sons, etc.—and gives us information about them. It is purely factual and constative. The statement “Mary Todd was born

in 1818,” for example, does nothing but state a fact. It does not perform an action, it does not *do* anything except speak. Because this is the only way the narrator communicates, these statements are the only information he puts forth, it could be said that his presence is purely constative. By isolating the narrator, Jones has also isolated the idea of the constative speech act.

Movement, however, in this piece and in general, is a performative act. Austin’s original principles were meant to be applied only to verbal communication, but if we consider movement to be a kind of text, or a kind of speech, the same parameters can be applied. Movement always says by doing—it *is* doing. Saying a movement, putting it in language, renders it motionless; talking about dance is not dancing, but speaking. A constative speech act, Austin says, must be able to be classified as either true or false. The performative speech act can not be analyzed in this way. It either happens or it doesn’t, but it is never really “true.” The same can be said of movement. When Jones’ dancers move, the information they put forth can not be “true” or “false,” it can only happen. The movements are not meant to be factual statements, or accurate representations of “true” events, but abstract, physical representations of emotions, relationships and characters.

Jones’ work in *Fondly do we hope... Fervently do we pray*, then, collapses together performative and constative information. The text gives us constative, factual, historical truths while the movement gives us performative, subjective, abstract information. The constative speech acts tell us what is happening, when, and to whom; the performative speech acts put forth connotative information alluding to emotion and subjectivity. The work is not, however, merely a juxtaposition of the two. The text and the movement do

not exist discretely, next to one another, but rather are thoughtfully intertwined, always in close relationship and dialogue with each other. This connection is explicitly established, early in the performance, in a statement from the narrator. In an early scene, introducing characters and “setting the stage” for the rest of the performance, the movement stops and the narrator steps forward. He introduces himself, while the dancers are paused, and says “I am one of a crowd.” He explains that, although he is separated from the group in space, in costume, and in style of communication, the words he speaks are intended to represent them. He is isolated, he is “one,” but he is the representative of the crowd. His statements are meant to represent more than his point of view and more than what their words explicitly state. They are intended to be read in conjunction with the movement statements, the performative actions. The two streams of information do not only exist simultaneously, they exist in dialogue and direct relation to each other—they are “of” each other. This explicit association of the narrator with the dancers, the narration with the movement, invites audiences to look for connections between the two.

By emphasizing this connection between the verbal information and physical information, Jones leads audiences to engage with both the movement and the text present in the work. This is particularly clear in scenes providing biographical information about Abraham Lincoln and his family members. In the scene which introduces Mary Todd and Lincoln’s children for the first time, Jones uses dry, historical text to identify the characters and provide factual information about who they are, while simultaneously using the movement to provide a more subjective, creative interpretation of what kind of people they might have been, and

what kind of lives they might have led. The dancer representing Abraham Lincoln and the dancer representing Mary Todd Lincoln perform a haunting and luscious duet while the narrator dictates historical information about their meeting and their marriage. The narrator tells us when and under what circumstances they met and were married, and they dance in close contact with each other, moving smoothly around the space as a single unit. They are joined by dancers representing their sons, lifted up and physically manipulated by them while the narrator describes their births, and subsequent premature deaths. The movement is not a literal representation of the facts. Instead, it provides emotional information which supplements the facts. The unstated emotional tone of the information is echoed in the dancing—the dancers lose energy and express sadness when the narrator tells of the son’s early deaths, for example—but the facts are not literally represented. We do not see a courtship acted out between Lincoln and Mary Todd; the sons perform no dramatic death scene. The text and the movement are not literally “saying” the same thing, but we nevertheless see the way they relate to each other, because we have been led, by the narrator and by the association of dancers with specific characters in the text, to connect them.

Connecting the language and the dance not only justifies their simultaneous presence in this piece, but leads to an understanding of the work that could not be achieved through a reading of either the text or the movement alone. If an audience member were only to observe the movement, in the scene with Lincoln and his family, for example, he or she would not necessarily know anything about these characters—it would not be clear that they were meant to portray particular historical figures, to tell a particular

story. If only the text were presented, however, this would also remove an important component of Jones’ message. When reading or hearing the words of a history textbook or a biography, which is the style in which this scene’s text is written, we do not necessarily see bodies or entertain abstract representations of the information we are given—we take in only the facts, the information as it is, communicated as quickly and as clearly as possible. Jones has added physical information, which does not stick strictly to the facts. It includes emotion, subjectivity, abstraction, metaphor, ambiguity. When the dancers portraying Lincoln’s sons, for example, lift Lincoln and Mary Todd into the air, we know Jones is not suggesting this literally happened. Knowing this, we must then wonder what he is suggesting. This could be any number of things (the Lincolns’ love for their sons “lifted” them up emotionally, they had a very supportive family life, etc.), but regardless of the specific conclusion reached by any particular audience member, the presence of both elements leads to a consideration of these figures’ emotional lives which the text alone would not necessarily evoke. The narration lets us know who these people are, in name, title and historical context; the dancing lets us know who they might have been, internally, emotionally, privately, and how they might have related to each other.

Some text/movement connections, however, are not so easily reached as this one. Jones seems to intentionally complicate our understanding of the work, making choices which are at some points anti-mimetic and counter-intuitive. The dancer Jones has chosen to portray Abraham Lincoln is a good example of this. This performer bears little to no physical resemblance to the real Lincoln. He is muscular and of average height, tan, with light brown

hair. He moves smoothly and gracefully, close to the ground and with the quality of a heavily-trained dancer, portraying none of the gawky awkwardness we have come to associate with the tall, skinny, long-limbed Abraham Lincoln of photographs and historical reenactments. Despite this disparity, the text makes it clear that this man is meant to be a representation of Lincoln—there is no question of what his identity is supposed to be. Jones provides no explicit explanation for this disconnect between the real Lincoln and the Lincoln he has created. He has made an anti-mimetic choice, pairing a dancer who bears no resemblance to Lincoln with text that, nonetheless, clearly identifies him as the fabled leader. Making sense of this choice, then, becomes the responsibility of the audience.

In addition to his physical appearance, the choreography the Lincoln character performs is also not perfectly aligned with the Abraham Lincoln of our collective imagination. It brings forth emotional qualities and concepts which are not commonly associated with Abraham Lincoln, not mentioned in history books. In duets with Mary Todd we see his tenderness, his romantic side. He looks young and graceful, leading her across the stage in a waltz-like partnership. Then, when the narrator describes his sons' deaths, we see his weakness and vulnerability. At the end of this scene, he is left lying prone at the center of the stage, motionless and alone. The widely accepted image of Abraham Lincoln is one of strength, fortitude, stoicism—this moment is in stark contrast to the way we have been taught to imagine this man. The narrator, however, provides near-constant affirmation that this man is meant to be Lincoln, despite the incongruent qualities he embodies. Rather than providing a clear physical representation of this familiar historical figure,

Jones has left us, instead, with a question: What do this movement and this dancer's presence have to do with the man described in the text?

This style of communication—leaving questions unanswered, presenting discontinuities without clear explanation—is not one we are accustomed to encounter in daily life. Mikhail Bakhtin's "The Problem of Speech Genres" explains that "each separate utterance is individual, of course, but each sphere in which language is used develops its own *relatively stable types* of these utterances. These we may call *speech genres*" (60). The style which defines a particular genre, says Bakhtin, is determined by the content and intended purpose of the speech, and "this style is inseparably linked to particular thematic unities and... to particular types of construction of the whole, types of its completion, and types of relations between the speaker and other participants" (Bakhtin 64). We expect the style of speech to relate to its content, its "thematic unities," and to what it is intended to do and who it is intended to communicate with. The type of idea, its "construction," and the desired result of its "completion," dictate the style in which it should be communicated—the easiest and most effective way to express a particular concept is the one which should be employed. Jones, however, chooses not to speak to us in the clearest, simplest way. He buries his ideas, seeking to express concepts without explicitly stating them—he does not *tell* us to consider Lincoln's subjectivity, but leads us there, indirectly, with his work's construction. He does not style his "speech" in a way that makes it easy to understand—his communicative style, his layering of disparate ideas without explanation of the connection between them, is not aligned with Bakhtin's rules, or with our expectations, as audience members.

Challenging conventional speech genres allows Jones to present more information than he would be able to through solely movement or text; he is able to simultaneously convey historical information and an artistic interpretation of it, skillfully intertwined them so that, together, they express one larger idea. Jones forces us to step outside our generic expectations, and to consider both the widely accepted truth of the historian (Mary Todd was born in 1818) and the individualized, abstracted interpretation of the artist (Lincoln and Mary Todd's love for their sons transcended politics and social conflict, figuratively lifted them up as the dancers on stage literally lift them up). In hearing and seeing these two statements together, we understand more than either could say in isolation. We not only see the movement and hear the text—we find the connection between them. In this case, Jones presents the idea that the names and facts we hear in the text are connected to real people, real bodies that moved and expressed, just as the dancers on stage do. He puts humanness in history by showing us bodies, reminding us that Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd Lincoln were whole, physical, emotional people, not just names in history books. He is able to do this because of the complex, layered style of communication he has created; using a new style of speech leads the audience into a new style of understanding, which accesses historical, factual truth as well as the universal, human truths contained therein.

Reaching this kind of understanding, rooted equally in information presented through language and through bodies, requires audiences to overcome dualistic thinking, and to reunite the mind and the body. *Fondly do we hope... Fervently do we pray* requires an understanding of both literal, historical truth and sym-

bolic, subjective ideas—the statements of the text and the qualities of the moving bodies. In the context of nonfictional, “serious” communication, a biography of a figure like Abraham Lincoln, for example, the mind-body dualism Grosz identifies in *Volatile Bodies* is generally present in full force. An educational presentation about Abraham Lincoln would not, in most cases, include any physical information. It would focus instead on his “animating intentions,” an intellectual understanding of the things he did and the objective, external reasons why he did them (Grosz vii). Jones does provide this information, through the text, but he uses bodies and movement to reach, as Grosz suggests, “a point from which to rethink the opposition between the inside and the outside” (21). The presence of both bodies and text, intertwined in meaning and overlapping in time, forces a deconstruction of the supposed separation between them.

In order to provide a simultaneously historical and humanizing perspective, Bill T. Jones has constructed *Fondly do we hope... Fervently do we pray* in a way which leads to an understanding of Lincoln based in both the objective facts of his life, and a consideration of his subjectivity. Jones skillfully brings audiences to this mode of analysis through an interweaving of textual narration and physical choreography. The staging of the work displays clearly the separation between the verbal realm and the physical realm, but it also asks the viewer to find a way to put them back together again. It presents the differences between textual and physical communication while also asking us to see them as one—they are different, but rather than isolating them, we should read them together. The work's message is dependent equally on the contributions of both types of communication, in a complete deconstruction of

mind/body dualism. Jones' non-traditional style of communication "tricks" us into a new style of analysis and understanding, rooted equally in objective fact and subjective affect. *Fondly do we hope... Fervently do we pray* leads audiences to understand the physical and the verbal as one, and thus is able to present conceptual information which could not be stated through either medium alone. Through the blending and layering of movement and language, Jones is able to inject factuality with subjectivity, and to present a work of art both historically specific and universally human.

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JOSEPH BITNEY

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NOMAD Prize for Excellence in Undergraduate Scholarship:
Second Place Winner

Mentor: **Ramona Tougas**

MARIA EDGEWORTH'S *THE IRISH INCOGNITO*

AND LITERARY FORM IN COLONIAL CONTEXTS

While many scholars have called the writings of Maria Edgeworth didactic fiction, this designation oversimplifies a body of work that is filled with tensions, ambiguities, and tricks of numerous kinds. These difficulties might be expected given Edgeworth's difficult sociopolitical status, for as a member of the Anglo-Irish elite—a "New English" Protestant social class given confiscated land in Ireland—Edgeworth herself occupied

a position that was neither fully English nor fully Irish. This liminal position undoubtedly informed her understanding of the Irish colonial situation, and many scholars have discussed Edgeworth's politics in relation to her novels. In this essay, though, I will examine her neglected story *The Irish Incognito*, a short fictional piece originally included in the larger political work *An Essay on Irish Bulls* (1802). *The Irish Incognito* relates the attempts at trickery of the Irishman Phelim O'Mooney, who tries to pass himself off as an Englishman under the name "Sir John Bull" to win a bet with his brother. The text itself is a short story with a structure like that of a folktale, beginning with the introduction of Phelim and the challenge he undertakes to pass as English before moving through various episodes where he succeeds or fails to remain "incognito." Therefore, the narrative is, at least in principle, quite simple, and the text as a whole depends on Phelim's trick for both its story and its thematic concerns.

However, the text is "tricky" in form as well as content, and in this essay I will focus on the formal tricks that complicate this ostensibly straightforward narrative. For although the text appears to comment on the differences between Irish and English forms of the speech, it actually works to undermine the notion of regional fiction, destabilizing the clear divide between the English and the Irish colonial "other." Instead of a hierarchical model of colonialism, the text presents a colonial situation characterized by hybridity, which Edgeworth mirrors in the blending and subversion of multiple genres. Furthermore, the text is also self-defeating and self-reflexive, undermining its own narrative stability and even highlighting its own status as fiction. With these formal tricks, then, the text not only challenges English narratives of superiority but also questions the ability of any narrative to model

the complexity of 19th century life in the context of colonialism. Therefore, the text offers a glimpse into the connections between imperialism and narrative form. And because many of its formal tricks are elements often considered to be "postmodern" literary characteristics, the text also reveals some of the ways that colonial and postcolonial situations, with their inherent syncretism and hybridity, may themselves be conducive to the development of aspects of postmodern literature—even well before the period officially denoted as "postmodernism."

Before I begin to examine the formal aspects of the text, though, I would like to briefly describe how the text's content confronts English notions of superiority and demonstrates an awareness of English imperialism. The story itself concerns Phelim's attempt to pass as English in England, chronicling his successes and slip-ups in various locations and among bystanders of various nationalities and social classes. Along the way, though, the narrative often undermines the English-Irish hierarchy, especially through the other characters Phelim encounters. One example is the character that Phelim meets early in the story named Mr. Queasy, whom the text gently criticizes as a "snug, soft-looking Englishman" who is "too great a fool to be a knave" (231, 237). At one point the text even mentions that Queasy "bowed sundry times as low as the fear of losing his wig would permit;" the personification in this description humorously depicts Queasy as dominated by "fear," reminding the reader how "soft" and subservient this Englishman is (232). In fact, if the text does depict colonial difference, it is often in favor of the supposed colonial "other" rather than the imperial power. This is especially evident in the clever play on the protagonist's names that concludes the story: "Phelim O'Mooney never relapsed into Sir

John Bull” (242). Because the word “relapse” implies a regression to a worse state, this diction suggests that being English is actually worse than being Irish, which blatantly contradicts the standard prejudices of the time.

Over the course of the story, the text even attacks the concept of Irish bulls, or verbal blunders associated with the supposedly dim-witted Irish. For example, when Phelim hears Miss Flat say the word “squeedged,” he notes it was a “blunder that never would have been made in Ireland” (236). Edgeworth also suggests that when Irish bulls are made, it is not because the Irish are dim-witted but rather because they have a special linguistic fecundity; the text conveys this idea by claiming that Phelim “was more in danger from excess than deficiency of ingenuity” (232). With these examples, the text directly subverts the notion of *Irish* bulls. In doing so, it also begins to undermine the supposed differences between the English and the Irish, suggesting by the end of the story that being the Englishman “Sir John Bull” was itself a bull for the “good-natured” and clever Irish protagonist (233).

In light of these revisionary portrayals of the English-Irish divide, I find it surprising that no scholarly work has examined *The Irish Incognito*.¹ In fact, the only critics that address this text specifically are Brian Hollingworth, who writes in a footnote that it might be “a subversive comment on the benefits of ‘union,’” and Marilyn Butler, who mentions it in passing as “a cross-fertilization of sentimental stage comedy and Lucianic fantasy” (Hollingworth 224, Butler 46). However, because of the text’s complex uses of

¹ Indeed, the entire *Essay on Irish Bulls*, of which *The Irish Incognito* is only a small part, has received little attention, even though it “explicitly links language with politics” in important ways and could be considered Edgeworth’s equivalent of the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* in proffering a “theoretical commentary” on her fiction (Shapiro 87, Butler 21).

literary form and exploration of the connections between narrative and empire, it is certainly worthy of attention and could be examined alongside contemporary postcolonial theory.² And even though Edgeworth herself is often associated with the regional novel, this story actually undercuts the notion of regional fiction.³ In terms of the story’s content, there are numerous points where Edgeworth obviously intends to suggest that regarding “bulls” there are “as good [of] English bulls as Irish” (238). On a more subtle level, though, even some of the minor details of plot and setting invoke imperialism; for instance, the item that Phelim delivers to his prospective wife’s estate is a “box of Sevre China,” and the estate itself includes “Egyptian tables” and a “Turkish sofa” which are mentioned multiple times (234, 235). Because these descriptions serve no important narrative function and are emphasized repeatedly and unnecessarily, they appear to be a sly method of reminding the reader of the imperial context that makes English luxury possible.

Still, even more unique are some of the formal difficulties of the text, which begin in the first sentence: “Sir John Bull was a native

² The issue of whether “postcolonial” theory applies to Ireland has been a somewhat tendentious one, given that postcolonialism is often associated with non-European regions like India, Africa, or the Caribbean. However, many scholars in the Irish studies field now think of Ireland in a postcolonial context, and Edgeworth’s text itself frequently engages with concepts discussed in postcolonial theory. Therefore, this approach can ultimately provide a useful framework for thinking about the ways in which *The Irish Incognito* depicts the colonial situation, regardless of whether one thinks that Ireland is officially “postcolonial” or not.

³ The regional novel “emphasizes the setting, speech, and social structure and customs of a particular locality, not merely as local color, but as important conditions affecting the temperament of the characters and their ways of thinking, feeling, and interacting” (Abrahms 231). For a thorough discussion of the regional novel during this time period (including Edgeworth), see K.D.M. Snell’s *The Regional Novel in Britain and Ireland, 1800-1900*. I first was introduced to the idea of how this text might be inverting the regional novel and critiquing an overarching narrative perspective from Dr. Mark Quigley’s lecture “Prose at the Margins” on Edgeworth and Jane Austen.

of Ireland, *bred* and *born* in the city of Cork” (228). This striking opening introduces the “ultra-English” name John Bull—which in fact was a character that served as the national personification of England—and yet says that he was a native of Ireland (Stillinger and Lynch 228). Although the next sentence clear things up by telling us that “his real name was Phelim O’Mooney,” it is important that the text begins with such a provocative and, as the Norton introduction to the text states, “disorienting” sentence (228, Stillinger and Lynch 228). Indeed, not only is the sentence “disorienting” in the sense that it confusing and disrupts our sense of orientation, but it is also literally dis-orienting in Edward Said’s sense of *orientalism*.⁴ For if most Englishmen thought they were inherently superior to the Irish, then Edgeworth directly challenges this idea by confusing our sense of who is who. And by placing “*bred*” first among the highlighted words “*bred*” and “*born*,” she also subtly suggests that it is more important where and how one is raised than only where one is born. This further undermines any notions of inherent regional superiority, and if this claim about the significance of the word order seems tenuous, it is strengthened by the fact that later in the *Essay* the phrase “*born* nor *bred* in Ireland” is used; this suggests that *The Irish Incognito*’s “*bred* and *born*” was not a stock phrase and that the word order here is significant (EOIB 243).

This opening sentence also introduces the issue of naming and identity in the text. Though the main character’s “real name” in the story is “Phelim O’Mooney,” Edgeworth refers to him with more than twenty different nouns over the course of the story, usually alternating between “Phelim,” “Phelim O’Mooney,” “O’Mooney,” “Sir

⁴ Said has famously written about “cultural imperialism,” which results from “a Eurocentric discourse that assumed the normality and pre-eminence of everything ‘occidental’” and represented the “oriental’ as an exotic and inferior other” (Abrahms 277).

John,” “Sir John Bull,” and “our hero.” Indeed, even the title of *The Irish Incognito* has “Irish” as the adjective and “incognito” as the noun, which would seem to imply that Phelim/Sir John is indeterminable at his most fundamental level—although this idea is sometimes contradicted in the text. This refusal to attach just one signifier to the intended signified also anticipates important postcolonial theories on the processes and the effects of naming: contemporary theorists have discussed how “the dynamic of ‘naming’ becomes a primary colonizing process because it appropriates, defines, [and] captures the [named object] in language” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 391-2). However, Edgeworth’s own “dynamic of naming” challenges instead of upholds the “colonizing process,” and by constantly alternating between names Edgeworth refuses to “capture” the named object in language. Neither does she, to borrow a concept from theorist Abdul JanMohamed, fix the native under the sign of the other; instead, her use of multiple names suggests the hybrid nature of the Irish protagonist and complicates any classifications of English and Irish (Ashcroft et al. 7).⁵

Therefore, this text works to deliberately do what many imperialist texts inadvertently do, which is “to ope[n] wider the very epistemological gap which [the process of naming] is designed to fill” (Ashcroft et al. 392). And by opening up this gap, Edgeworth’s tactic of constantly alternating between names also demonstrates several the problems of identity discussed in contemporary critical theory, including that “identity should be used in the plural ‘identities,’” “identities cannot be upheld without the cooperation of others [and are] constituted in a dialectic process,” and finally that “narrative identity [is] part of a general performative identity which

⁵ For an excellent discussion of a similar phenomenon in Edgeworth’s *Ormond*, see Cosgrove 62-3.

we create inside our social roles” (Fludernik 261).

Still, the formal complexity of Edgeworth’s text moves far beyond her occasionally complex syntax or her varied application of names. One of the most important formal features is Edgeworth’s use of genre, and throughout *The Irish Incognito*, Edgeworth invokes multiple genres with carefully chosen descriptions and allusions. The only genres mentioned in scholarship on the tale thus far have been the “sentimental stage comedy,” “Lucianic fantasy,” and “trickster tale from the folk tradition,” but there are other genres in the text that are just as significant (Butler 46, Stillinger and Lynch 228). The invocation of the fairy tale is perhaps the clearest, and at one point there is a simile comparing Phelim to “the man in the fairy tale who was obliged to tie his legs lest he should outrun the object of which he was in pursuit” (232). Edgeworth also evokes the fairy tale formula during the story’s conclusion with noticeably fairy tale-esque language: “[Phelim] persisted in keeping silence till the clock struck twelve! Then the charm was broken” (242, my emphasis). When considering that this text uses the language of the fairy tale, one might therefore expect an ending where Phelim marries an Englishwoman as he had hoped to and lives happily ever. However, the story subverts these expectations for a formulaic happy ending; by ending with Phelim returning happily to Ireland and never “relapsing” into John Bull, Edgeworth reconceptualizes the happy ending to emphasize the moral superiority of the Irish over the prejudiced and sometimes even “brutal” English (239).

However, even more important in terms of genre is the text’s use of the classical epic, and just by this genre’s presence we can see hints of a connection between imperialism and narrative form that stretches back at least to Virgil’s *Aeneid*. While this genre is not

invoked as clearly as the fairy tale, Edgeworth does make numerous references to it. Indeed, not only does the text refer to Phelim as “our hero” 24 times, but at several points it uses conspicuously epic language, including the mention of “auspicious omens” and the claim that “no mortal” could detect Phelim (230, 235). The text further calls the genre to mind through other classical allusions and Latin and Greek terms, nearly all of which are directly associated with Phelim. This includes Phelim’s declaration that if he wins his bet he “may sing Io triumphe [a Greek cry of triumph] in spite of my brother” and the text’s use of the Latin terms “bona waviata” and “lapsus linguae” to describe Phelim’s actions (241, 233, 238). Other more minor examples include a reference to the “three graces,” the use of the Latin term “Hibernian” to describe Phelim multiple times, and the statement that “Phelim was a proficient in the Socratic art of putting judicious interrogatories” (230, 232). There are also several connections between Phelim and Julius Caesar, which strengthen this classical connection and invert notions of Irish subservience and English dominion. When Phelim lands in Deal, for instance, the text notes that this is “where Julius Cesar once landed before him [with] the same resolution to see and conquer,” and later the text describes Phelim facing the “ides of March” (230, 237).

Because these generic frameworks are not necessary in terms of telling the basic story of *The Irish Incognito*, it is interesting that they are even included at all, not to mention how they are deployed, blended, and subverted in complex ways. In fact, the classical epic genre actually serves multiple functions. On the most basic level, the diction of “our hero” forces all readers—including prejudiced Englishmen—to accept an Irishman as their hero, and even likens him to other “great men” like Julius Caesar that readers

were more familiar with.⁶ This combats notions of an English-Irish hierarchy by making Phelim not just the protagonist but the character with the most agency in the text. Therefore, it is not just that Edgeworth's fiction "places itself at a distance from the centers of power" by having Irish characters as protagonists, as Eilean Chuilleanain claims; instead, by portraying an Irish "hero" with ability and agency, the text exposes "the model of the imperial 'center' controlling a colonial 'margin' [as] a myth" (Chuilleanain 30, Ashcroft et al. 213). In doing so, the text also combats the notion of regional fiction, situating the Irish protagonist in a larger context and putting him in positions of power.⁷

Moreover, by later subverting this classical generic framework, Edgeworth also promotes a conscious revision of the genre and of the possibility of the epic hero. Indeed, though the text recalls the classical hero many times throughout the story, the use of this parallel is ultimately not to be taken seriously; the text plays with our expectations and actually satirizes the idea of a brave and courageous hero. Take for instance the first scene in England, where a "malicious waiter" at an inn places a plate of eggs on the table (230). Here, Phelim recognizes the possibility of detection, and the text declares that "our hero magnanimously abstained from [the eggs]" (230). This portrayal depicting a hero who bravely

⁶ Discussing Edgeworth and other writers, Melissa Fegan has noted that "while Irish writers remained reliant on the English market, the evolution of the stranger [as a figure in nineteenth-century Irish literature] shows the English being displaced both as heroes and ideal readers of Anglo-Irish fiction" (Fegan 45).

⁷ Still, I do not want to oversimplify the text's relationship to the regional novel, which is a rather difficult one that I will not be able to fully explore in this essay. Although it seems to be working against the concept by portraying an Irishman who can easily adopt a non-Irish role and is not unavoidably shaped by his heritage, the text sometimes suggests that despite Phelim's best efforts, an immutable Irishness comes through. This helps show some of the tensions in Edgeworth's work, and though Edgeworth importantly does not equate Irishness with inferiority, many scholars have critiqued her personal and political views.

abstains from the "malicious" waiter's eggs creates an intentionally lofty depiction of a trivial event, building up the scene to an absurd extent and deflating the idea of the hero for comic effect. This genre subversion continues at the tale's denouement: while Phelim set out like Caesar "to see and conquer," at the end of the story he has only "conquered his foolish dislike to trade" (242). With this ending, the text elucidates that its "hero" is, while clever and able, decidedly not an epic hero. Understanding that Edgeworth is an "anticlassical writer" is therefore key in examining the text, as is noting that Edgeworth is not aiming for literary realism or psychological depth here (Chuilleanain 30).⁸

Also important is that this "mock-heroic" mode that Brian Hollingworth detects in the *Essay on Irish Bulls* does not need to be read as serving "to diminish the status of the vernacular" by revealing the distance between "the lowly" and "the elevated" (Hollingworth 66). Although Edgeworth is gently mocking Phelim here, I would argue that Hollingworth has missed Edgeworth's more important political project: by destabilizing the epic, she also destabilizing English imperialism. Indeed, the point is not that Edgeworth wants Phelim to achieve the status of the classical hero, but that she does not want him to; by not fitting into the model of an epic hero, Phelim and the other "lowly" characters are also not fitting into the mold of imperialism, prejudice, and exploitation. For it was not just Greek and Roman imperialism but English imperialism that Edgeworth criticized, and in another part of the *Essay* she writes:

"the monopolizing pride [that] inspires one nation with the

⁸ Peter Cosgrove's comments about Edgeworth's novel *Ormond* also apply well to the functions of characters and genre in *The Irish Incognito*: "[Edgeworth] does not present characters under the screen of realism [because] she wants to draw our attention to the narrative functions they perform" (Cosgrove 73-4).

belief that all the rest of the world are barbarians, and speak barbarisms, is evidently a very useful prejudice, which the English, with their usual good sense, have condescended to adopt from the Greeks and Romans. They have applied it judiciously in their treatment of France and Ireland [to allow them] the belief that they are superiour” (*EOIB* 14).

In light of these explicit connections that she draws between classical imperialism and English imperialism, it seems that Edgeworth’s many references that connect the epic genre to Greece and Rome also connect the genre to a tradition of imperialism and prejudice. Edgeworth’s subversive redeployment of this genre, then, offers a method of literary resistance to this strict form and its problematic implications. And, ultimately, these anti-imperialist effects of her subversion of the classical epic reveal some of the larger ramifications of the text’s hybrid literary form.⁹

Consequently, although Edgeworth’s “prose national allegories” like *The Irish Incognito* might “appear to play down and weaken the political allegory by introducing other genres,” I think in many ways the introduction of other genres actually intensifies the story’s political nature (Butler 46). I would also argue that Edgeworth’s generic blending better reflects the nature of the colonial situation than a more traditional generic framework or an early attempt at literary “realism” could.¹⁰ And while I have already noted both the

⁹ We could also read this “mock heroic mode” as a comment on the status of fiction in Edgeworth’s time, or as Edgeworth showing how the classical epic as a genre is outdated and not fit for modeling the complexities of 19th century life. As Heidi Thomson notes, the contemporary world as Edgeworth saw it “[did] not really allow for individual heroism because social authority is group-determined” (Thomson 168). See also Cosgrove 74.

¹⁰ In fact, the issue of when and where literary “realism” is possible is a matter of some debate. Terry Eagleton has written that “literary realism requires certain cultural preconditions, few of which were available in Ireland. The realist novel is the form par excellence of settlement and stability, gathering individual lives into an integrated whole; and social conditions in Ireland hardly lent themselves [this] reconciliation” (Eagleton 146-7).

fairy tale and classical epic genres, even this is not the full extent of Edgeworth’s genre blending. Though writing about Ormond, Cosgrove’s claim that “the novel evokes two overlapping genres, the bildungsroman and the apologue [...] which reinforce and contradict each other” could also apply to *The Irish Incognito* since it explores the development of the young “hero” like a bildungsroman and provides a kind of moral fable like an apologue (Cosgrove 63).

This genre blending may be quite unexpected in such an ostensibly simple and didactic work, and, to quote Robert Tracy, “[Edgeworth] often deliberately foils the plot she has been developing [and] at times her didacticism is threatened by her eagerness to exploit the [literary potential] of her material” (Tracy 1). However, this is vital in understanding the ways in which much of Edgeworth’s fiction works “to defeat and mock the expectations of readers and to expose the blindness of narrators and editors” (Chuilleanain 23).¹¹ In fact, Edgeworth’s refusal to fit her story into one conventional form and instead create a complex and multilayered hybrid narrative ties into a number of the most important aspects of postcolonial theory, including the rejection of a ‘master narrative’ of Western imperialism and an emphasis on the hybridization of colonial languages and cultures (Abrahms 277). If Edgeworth viewed a singular narrative perspective as too simple—or perhaps even steering dangerously close to an attempt at providing all-encompassing perspective akin to a form of imperialism—then the way Edgeworth’s fiction actually works is to reveal “the inapplicability of simple models of the colonial relationship to 19th century

¹¹ Chuilleanain also has several other astute comments on Edgeworth’s work that apply quite well to this text and may explain why the framework of *The Irish Incognito* seems so unusual when judged by conventional standards. I find her claim that the world viewed from Maria Edgeworth’s point of view as an Anglo-Irish writer could never conform to the critical categories of London publishers or English readers especially useful (Chuilleanain 38).

Ireland [and to explore] the role of literature within a colonial context” (Bellany 58). Consequently, Edgeworth’s genre blending and hybrid form are perhaps more realistic in some ways than any early attempt at literary realism, for they reflect the hybridization that she saw as characteristic of the colonial situation.¹² Overall, then, in the formal elements of this text and of some of Edgeworth’s other work, both characters and readers are forced to negotiate complex terrain—“a negotiation that mirrors the acts of adjustment and re-adjustment engaged in by those living in early nineteenth-century Ireland” (Cosgrove 63).¹³

The text also prompts us to realize, as Jacqueline Belanger does, that even if Edgeworth’s works are “more presentation than re-presentation,” it is precisely this issue of whether Ireland could in fact be ever represented without mediation that preoccupied Edgeworth (Belanger 123). Keeping this in mind, I would like to discuss one of the other most important characteristics of Edgeworth’s text: the text’s own undermining of its own stability and its self-reflexivity. And while these characteristics are used in unique ways in *The Irish Incognito*, at the same time they do fit into a larger tradition of Irish literature; to quote Seamus Deane, “Irish literature tends to dwell on the medium in which it is written because it is difficult not to be self-conscious about a language which has be-

¹² Amy J Devitt has written that a genre’s social purposes are at least as important as its formal and aesthetic components, which is key to understanding Edgeworth’s use of genre here (Devitt 698).

¹³ György Lukács famously called the novel “the epic of an age in which the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given, in which the immanence of meaning in life has become a problem, yet which still thinks in terms of totality” (Lukács 186). While not unproblematic, this idea gives us a useful way of thinking about why Edgeworth is different. Because Edgeworth’s ambivalent Anglo-Irish position made it so that she did not think “in terms of totality,” we can begin to see why she eschews the attempts at totality and realism in the novel form and in fact replaces them with complex, hybrid, and—as I will soon discuss—self-reflexive forms.

come simultaneously native and foreign” (Deane 13).¹⁴

Regarding Edgeworth’s almost postmodern concern with destabilizing stable narratives—including the strong anti-imperialist implications of such an act—I would briefly like to explore how some of the text’s formal features serve to undermine its own certainty and coherence. In addition to the varied and intentionally problematic use of names in the text, particularly in the aforementioned first sentence, the text has other moments where it refuses to be clear or authoritative. One example is the decision to include instances where the narrator chooses an imprecise word and then corrects it without expunging the previous word. This technique occurs twice with the phrase “or rather;” the text’s assertion that the Englishman Queasy “acted as a gentleman usher, or rather as a showman” is the best example (229, 234). With the diction of “or rather,” the text implies that “showman” is the better description. Yet, interestingly, Edgeworth still leaves the word “usher” in, and the text seems to consciously, if subtly, deconstruct its own coherence. This makes sense if we consider that “stability of any kind, moral, economic, or political” is difficult not just in the colonialist realities of nineteenth-century Ireland, but also in “the laissez faire world that Edgeworth [herself] favors” (Thomson 169).¹⁵

Furthermore, the text displays a startling level of self-reflexivity, and it seems impossible to deny that—as Cosgrove claims

¹⁴ Eagleton makes a very similar claim when he declares that “Irish writing more commonly lays bare the device, and so lends itself more obviously to modernism [and, I would argue, postmodernism]” (Eagleton 168).

¹⁵ Eagleton has further written that “if the realist novel is the form of stability, it is also the home of totality [and] such an Olympian standpoint is harder to come by in a divided society, where art, like the rest of intellectual life, is more directly bound to partisan ends” (Eagleton 150). *The Irish Incognito* seems to be a prime example of this issue where “a unifying mode of representation [...] is no longer able to capture a contradictory reality” (Eagleton 177).

about *Ormond*—“writing itself becomes one of the subjects of the book” (Cosgrove 75). For instance, at one point the text states that “whether our hero’s good-nature deceived him we shall not determine” (239). Here, the text suggests that it is either not the place of the narrator to “determine” the issue or that the issue is not important enough to warrant “determining,” and the text displays an awareness of the ability of a narrative perspective to shape the views and even the prejudices of readers.¹⁶ The text further suggests this idea in the narrator’s claim about a boxing match that takes place during the story: “[the details of the fight] we forbear to decide or relate, as all this has been settled in the newspapers of the day” (239). In this sentence, the diction of “decide” conveys a realization that the text is fiction and that the narrator can “decide” how to portray certain events. With this one word, Edgeworth demonstrates an awareness of the broader political and cultural issues tied to narrative perspectives, a difficult issue that many twentieth and twenty-first century theorists discuss.¹⁷

As a result, Edgeworth’s text illustrates the potential of narratives “for formal as well as thematic exploration of identities and alterities” (Fludernik 272). And by being self-reflexive and even self-defeating, Edgeworth’s text explicitly investigates the role of narrative and the ultimate authority of its narrator in shaping the perspective of readers. This fits with a more general aim in Edgeworth’s fiction to explore “what it means to a trustworthy authority on Ireland [and] to caution readers about taking such seemingly

¹⁶ Because Edgeworth is cautious about making overarching claims with absolute certainty in a world where it can be quite difficult to “determine” anything with confidence, there is perhaps some truth to Eagleton’s generalization that “political strife breeds epistemological uncertainty” (Eagleton 170).

¹⁷ See, for example, *New Perspectives on Narrative Perspective*, edited by Willie Van Peer and Seymour Chatman. For a more specifically postcolonial application, see Homi Bhabha’s *Nation and Narration*.

authoritative representations on faith” (Belanger 114). Because they problematize the basis for any textual knowledge about Ireland, Edgeworth’s texts prompt an “opening up [of] questions about the experience that underpins any representation of Ireland, and about whether any text can be entirely trustworthy” (Belanger 114-15).¹⁸ In *The Irish Incognito*, then, it is not just the authority of master narratives that becomes problematic; in an almost poststructuralist way, this tale explicitly questions the authority of texts themselves. In fact, I would even go so far as claiming that Edgeworth’s aim is deconstructive in the specifically poststructuralist sense of the term. For if one of deconstruction’s basic premises is recognizing the binarisms fundamental in Western discourse—including how they are often hierarchal—and exposing their interdependency, Edgeworth’s recognition of the hierarchical English/Irish (or Self/Other) binary and her subversive take on it is certainly “deconstructive.”¹⁹

Finally, if we take into account the idea that postcolonial fiction is often characterized by “complex and multilayered ironies that invert orientalist stereotypes, present the former colonizer as the inferior party, and foreground the agency of the native subject,” then it may be worthwhile to think of *The Irish Incognito* in “postcolonial” terms (Fludernik 272). Perhaps more interesting, though, is that so many features of *The Irish Incognito* are constitutive of “postmodern” aesthetics. Not only does the text feature the

¹⁸ Concordantly, Edgeworth seems to have realized that non-fiction often “does not deal in facts but in opinions” (Cosgrove 68). Liz Belany has discussed a somewhat similar phenomenon in Edgeworth’s *Castle Rackrent*, where “the fictional perspective [of the text] is that of the reader [and] we are expected to put our own construction on the actions of the Rackrents” (Belany 62).

¹⁹ This “deconstruction” is, of course, more important in how it helps us think about the functions of *The Irish Incognito* itself rather than it being simply another erudite critical term we can apply to the story. There is more to be said about Edgeworth and deconstruction—especially given the self-reflexive and self-defeating moments in her texts—but that is not something I will be able to discuss fully here.

genre blending, narrative layering, irony, parody, genre subversion, and self-reflexivity that I have discussed, but it also includes other “postmodern” elements; some of the more prominent examples are the ideas of doubling and simulacra, an emphasis on artificiality and surfaces, and connotations of “high” and “low” culture. And while periodization is always problematic and “postmodern” elements can be found in many earlier works, *The Irish Incognito* does seem to contain more of these elements than one might expect. This “postmodern” emphasis is fitting, though, if we take seriously the ideas of critics who argue that the postcolonial actually precedes the postmodern.²⁰

Furthermore, if we also consider the formal difficulties of Edgeworth’s text in the context of her own difficult position, we can see reminders of how texts are shaped by their authorial context.²¹ This reminds us that Edgeworth’s fiction “shows how those who work within a minor literature [written by a minority group but one that is politically dominant] can capitalize on their dually marginalized status and create complex and troubling works” (Shapiro 87). Indeed, settler colony cultures like the Anglo-Irish have often held complex and difficult views of their nation and their own culture, and “faced with their ‘mosaic’ reality, they have [provided] clear examples of the constructedness of nations” (Ashcroft et al. 151). In light of the connections between the modern novel and the nation-state, I would argue that the “mosaic” of genre and the

²⁰ See Mishra, Vijay and Bob Hodge. “What is Post(-)colonialism?” *Textual Practice*. 5.3(1991): 399-414.

²¹ Mark Hawthorne and Brian Hollingworth have noted how the tensions in Edgeworth’s own sociopolitical views gave her narrative fiction an unusual depth for a didactic writer (Hawthorne 25, Hollingworth 68). Rebecca Shapiro similarly claims “Edgeworth’s indeterminate position enabled her to mediate between positive and negative aspects of each nation to the other” (Shapiro 76).

attention to “constructedness” in *The Irish Incognito* are Edgeworth’s way of suggesting—or imitating—the hybridity of settler colonies and the artificiality of nations.²²

In citing all of this postcolonial theory, my aim is not to read Edgeworth through a hermeneutic lens but to show how her work compares to these theories. In fact, one could even see Edgeworth herself as a creative “theorist;” by deciding how to (re)present Ireland and England in light of the tensions and ambiguities she saw around her, Edgeworth was engaging with many of the central concerns of contemporary theory in complex ways. And while any overarching claims about colonial contexts and the development of postmodern literary characteristics is far beyond the scope of this essay—and indeed would be a sweeping generalization of the kind which Edgeworth herself viewed with suspicion—I think that by looking at *The Irish Incognito* and other texts like it, we can see some of the connections between imperialism and narrative form. Given the surprisingly little research done specifically on this topic, I also think this is an area that should be explored more thoroughly. For after all, if narratives play such a fundamental role in the workings of and the resistance to imperialism, then understanding how they are constructed and how they function formally should add to our understanding not just of narrative form but of culture, politics, history, art, and the ways in which they intersect.

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²² For more on the connections between the rise of the modern nation state and the corresponding structures found in imaginative literature, see Timothy Brennan’s “The National Longing for Form” in *Nation and Narration*.

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Honorable Mention

Mentor: **Julie Bacon**

ILLUMINATING THE CONSTRUCTION OF NARRATIVES AND IDENTITIES

IN JONATHAN SAFRAN FOER'S
EVERYTHING IS ILLUMINATED

INTRODUCTION

In Jonathan Safran Foer's novel *Everything Is Illuminated*, a young Jewish-American man named Jonathan Safran Foer travels to Ukraine in search of Augustine, a woman he believes saved his grandfather from the Nazis during the Second World War. He is helped by Alex, a Ukrainian man Jonathan's age, who works for his father's company Heritage Touring, assisting Jewish-Americans in their search for long-lost relatives in Ukraine

and Poland. The novel is based on, and narrated by, Jonathan and Alex, who set on a journey to find out what happened to Jonathan's relatives during the Holocaust. The text consists of three different narratives—Alex's story, Jonathan's story, and Alex's letters to Jonathan—that continuously switch from one to another, forming a complex and rotating narrative structure.

Because of the novel's setting, academic research has so far focused exclusively on the representations of the Holocaust and trauma in *Everything Is Illuminated*, analyzing for example the connections between postmodernism and post-Holocaust writing (See Raethel), the role of language in conveying traumatic experiences (See Kern-Stähler) and the use of magical realism when writing Holocaust history (See Adams). There has been some research on the novel's narrative voices, but in this case, too, narrative structures have been linked with the themes of trauma and the Holocaust; in his article "Ethics in the Second Degree: Trauma and Dual Narratives in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated*," Francisco Collado-Rodriguez states that the novel's two narrators serve to evaluate the power of fiction as an ethical instrument, releasing repressed Holocaust trauma, while Menachem Feuer, in his article "Almost Friends: Post-Holocaust Comedy, Tragedy, and Friendship in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated*," focuses on Jonathan's and Alex's attempts at building friendship and reconciliation as opposing sides of the post-Holocaust generations through different narrative styles.

In contrast to previous research, this paper will take a different approach to the themes of the novel by focusing on the construction of narratives and identities in *Everything Is Illuminated* in connection to its role as a part of the novel genre, and not spe-

cifically with its connection to the Holocaust. Here, *Everything Is Illuminated* becomes a text about the construction of a search for meaning and the illumination of this construction in the postmodern world, thus making the novel reach new self-awareness of its own form, content and part in the novel genre. By applying narratology, and specifically theories of implied authors and unreliable narration by Wayne Booth, Greta Olson and James Phelan, I will first analyze the tricky narrative structure of *Everything Is Illuminated* and the contrast Jonathan and Alex establish through their different narrative styles.¹ Then I will continue by discussing the function of these narrative voices in the light of Georg Lukács' theory of the novel genre, explaining how this contrast is used in order to show the different means of constructing one's identity and search for meaning in the postmodern world. Finally, I will tie these issues to the role of the reader and to the way *Everything Is Illuminated* becomes self-aware of its own form as a novel mainly through its third narrative, Alex's letters, and how it thus comes to question the novel genre's traditional structures and roles. Through self-awareness the notion of trick becomes essential to the novel; in *Everything Is Illuminated* it is not only the narrators who are trying to trick the reader and—even more importantly—themselves, but also, eventually, the reader trying to trick himself into believing in the truth of what he is reading.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF NARRATIVES

The chapters of *Everything is Illuminated* are divided into three

¹ So far narrative research on the novel has focused on the comedy/tragedy dichotomy Alex and Jonathan create as narrators, and emphasized the novel as dual narration between the two. In contrast, I will analyze unreliability through textual signals and most importantly see the novel as consisting—instead of a dual narration—of three distinct narratives.

different rotating narratives; Jonathan describing his family's history in Trachimbord as an omniscient third person narrator, Alex recounting their search for Jonathan's past in Ukraine through first person narration, and Alex's letters written to Jonathan after their journey—which reveal that both men are in fact writing their chapters for a book Jonathan intends to publish. These narratives are distinct from one another in terms of both their style and content, and it is around the tricky narrative voices of Alex and Jonathan and the contrast that they establish as narrators that the themes of *Everything Is Illuminated* are built.

The text begins with a chapter by Alex, who makes his presence as a first person narrator very clear in his chapters; he is consciously taking the role of a storyteller, calling Jonathan the “hero” of his story and constantly referring to the act of narrating: “This is where the story begins. But first I am burdened to recite my good appearance ... I will describe my eyes and then begin the story. My eyes are blue and resplendent. Now I will begin the story” (Foer 3-4). This self-awareness, connected to his exaggerated use of the English language and his equally excessive descriptions of himself and others, lead the reader early on to suspect Alex of trying to trick his audience. In her article “Reconsidering Unreliability: Fallible and Untrustworthy Narrators,” Greta Olson describes different textual indicators of unreliable narration (97-98), such as excessive remarks relating to self, and linguistic signals of expressiveness—both of which are evident in Alex's narration. Other signals of unreliability can also be easily found in Alex's chapters, including: narrator's explicit contradictions (Alex describing his looks: “My stomach is very strong, although it presently lacks muscles” [4]), admitted lack of reliability (Alex de-

scribing a conversation: “I must confess that there is so much I do not understand” [6]), metanarrative discussions of the narrator’s believability (Alex commenting on *almost* being unreliable: “I was near-at-hand to writing that we both relish to remain conscious tardy, but that is not faithful” [7]), and contradictions between narrator’s statements and his actions (Alex’s statements of the level of his English skills and his actual ability to use the language fluently in his narration: “I had performed recklessly well in my second year of English at university” [2]).

With all these textual indicators of unreliability already visible in the texts’ first chapter, Alex becomes somewhat of a textbook case of unreliable narration—and thus the reader is easily led to believe that he has now discovered the text’s trick. Wayne C. Booth, who was the first to introduce the term ‘unreliable narration’ in his book *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, wrote how unreliable narration is used as a function of irony; once the reader realizes a dichotomy between the personalized narrator’s perceptions and those of the implied author², he starts to read against the grain of the text, looking for an unspoken message beyond the literal one (304). Thus, “the author and reader are secretly in collusion, behind the speaker’s back” and “the speaker is himself the butt of the ironic point” (Booth 304). This is exactly the case with Alex as well—the more he tries to convince the reader of how “premium” (2) of a person he is, the more entertaining the reader finds his

² Olson gives an accurate definition of the term implied author: “The implied author represents a tool with which the critic can talk about the values, linguistic peculiarities, and worldview of a particular text—as they can be documented in a text—without referring to the personality of the historical person who wrote the book” (105). Unreliable narration and implied authors make texts function on two different levels, as James Phelan describes in *Estranging and Bonding Unreliability*: “[in unreliable narration] we have one text, two speakers (one explicit, one implicit), two audiences, and at least two purposes...the implied author uses the character narrator as a spokesperson” (224)

campy unreliability and instead starts to read against his narration, looking for an implicit meaning the implied author is trying to convey. However, it is important to point out that humor in Alex’s chapters is partly intentional; Alex is deliberately using comedy as his way of storytelling, as he later explains in his letters— but what he doesn’t realize and can’t control is his unintended comedy when his descriptions are out of place or when he incorrectly uses English, for example when he and Jonathan are having a hard time understanding each other: “ ‘Your train ride appeased you?’ I [Alex] asked. ‘Oh, God,’ he [Jonathan] said, ‘twenty-six hours, fucking unbelievable’. This girl Unbelievable must be very majestic, I thought” (32).

After a chapter of Alex’s first person narration, the text takes a complete turn to Jonathan’s omniscient third person narration about his ancestors’ life in the shetl of Trachimbord. In contrast to Alex, Jonathan never describes or mentions himself by name in his chapters; Jonathan’s only reference to himself comes when he introduces some of the characters of the story as his relatives, usually when talking about Brod, “my great-great-great-great-great-grandmother” (16). The reader is able to construct Jonathan as the narrator of these chapters later on because of the third narrative, Alex’s letters, which serve as a commentary to the writing process of both Jonathan’s and Alex’s chapters. While Alex uses comedy and unsuccessfully hidden unreliability as ways of establishing his narration, Jonathan’s narration is characterized by tragedy and openly fantastical elements, starting with Brod’s mysterious birth in a local river:

“It was March 18, 1791, when Trachim B’s double-axle wagon either did or did not pin him against the bottom

of the Brod River ... In the middle of the string and feathers, surrounded by candles and soaked matches, prawns, pawns, and silk tassels...was a baby girl, still mucus-glazed" (8-13)

All of Jonathan's characters lead tragic lives where they become accustomed to irrational events and to their incapability of finding true love or happiness. Thus, Jonathan's narration establishes a clear contrast to Alex's humorous chapters. Occasionally the sad tones of Jonathan's narration are, however, lightened up with tragicomic events showing the absurdity of the lives his characters are leading, for example when describing the shetl's religious customs, such as the constant moving of the synagogue between the sacred Jewish part and the secular human part of town "as the ratio of sacred to secular sifted" (10). Although the reader later finds out through Alex's letters that Jonathan is inventing everything he writes, the term 'unreliable narrator' can only be applied to personalized, first person narrators like Alex and therefore does not concern Jonathan's chapters. Jonathan does, however, play with the notion of reliability in his own narration as well, although in a much more implicit way—for example by commenting on his relatives' beliefs and stories within his narration: "This, of course, doesn't make any sense. But what does?" (16), "Is this someone to trust for a story?" (15). These comments serve on the level of the entire text, guiding the reader to pay even more attention to the different narrators of the story, especially Alex. The importance of such questions becomes clearer once the reader is introduced to the third narrative of *Everything Is Illuminated*, namely Alex's letters written solely for Jonathan.

These letters do not only show the connection between Al-

ex's and Jonathan's chapters and the development of the men's present friendship simultaneously with the development of their stories, but they also—and even more importantly—deconstruct everything that has been previously said in Alex's and Jonathan's narration by commenting on every detail of their writing process. The reader, who previously (in Alex's chapters) was led to believe that he understood the text's trick of unreliability behind Alex-the-narrator's back, is now doomed to realize that it was he, *the reader*, who was being double-tricked—because in these letters Alex all of a sudden explicitly reveals his own unreliability by describing all the different ways in which he has edited and invented his chapters. Alex writes about Jonathan's requests on what Alex should alter in his parts of the story ("To appease you, I modified the scene so that the two of you appear more as friends and less as lovers or nemesises" [101]), comments on whether Alex obeyed these wishes or not ("With regards for how you ordered me to remove the section where you talk about your grandmother, I must tell you that this is not a possibility" [179]), Alex's own alterations to his story and what events took place ("I am glad that you were good-humored about the part I invented about commanding you to drink the coffee" [142]), Alex's hopes on how Jonathan should change his narrative ("Or, here is a majestic idea: perhaps Brod could be Augustine...You would have to alter your story very much, and she would be very aged, of course, but might it be wonderful in this manner?" [143])—and even on how Jonathan pays Alex to write for him ("Per the currency that you sent along, you must be informed that I would write this even in the absence of it" [24]).

Thus, the letters simultaneously link the different narratives

together and confuse the reader; what is the meaning of unreliable narration in a text if the trick is so quickly revealed by the narrator (Alex) himself? In addition, the letters bring out that the omniscient third person narrator, the hero of Alex's chapters, and even the actual author of the novel are all named Jonathan Safran Foer.³ This complicates the question of the different levels of the text; since the character in Alex's chapters, the narrator of Jonathan's chapters, and the person in charge of the fictive book (to whom Alex is writing his letters) are all the same Jonathan, is he the one in charge of the final outcome of the text? In other words, should the implied author of the text be identified with Jonathan telling a story behind Alex's back, or is there yet a 'higher' implied author working even behind Jonathan's back? In order to answer these questions it is important to address the issue of how the narrative voices are linked to the broader themes of the novel.

SEARCH FOR MEANING IN THE NOVEL GENRE

Since Jonathan never refers to himself in his narration, it is mainly through Alex's chapters and letters that the reader gets to form an image of the two narrators. Alex portrays both himself and Jonathan as two young men who are more or less dissatisfied with their lives. At first Alex does this with arrogance—Ukraine is too old and small for such a premium being as himself, and he wonders why someone like Jonathan would wish to leave his awesome

³ Using the physical author's name is another trick posed by the text, complicating the boundaries of fiction and nonfiction and the different narrative levels. However, the physical author and his connection to the narrators, characters and implied authors will not be discussed in this paper, firstly because the term 'implied author' is used here in order to avoid the issue of intentional fallacies, and second because of what is said in the Acknowledgments of *Everything Is Illuminated*: "This is a work of fiction...product of the author's imagination, except in the case of historical figures and events, which are used fictitiously, and, of course, the case of JSF himself."

life in America to come search for relatives in Ukraine: "I had the opinion that Jewish people were having shit between their brains. This is because all I knew of Jewish people was that they paid Father very much currency in order to make vacations *from* America to Ukraine" (3). However, as the stories develop the reader is able to see the true complexity of Alex's feelings; he is expecting more from life than what he has been able to find and experience so far in his hometown. In his book *Theory of the Novel*, Lukács describes how the novel was able to emerge once the totality of life was broken, making the characters of the novel "seekers" trying to find and construct meaning in their life once it was no longer immanent and given by the gods: "The novel is the epic of an age in which the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given, in which the immanence of meaning in life has become a problem... the novel is objectivized as the psychology of the novel's heroes: they are seekers" (McKeon 186-189). According to Lukács, only prose could convey the subject's transcendental homelessness and estrangement from the world (McKeon 185)—and it is this estrangement that the narrators of *Everything Is Illuminated* are also portraying, although through very different styles of narration.

Thus, both Jonathan and Alex essentially become seekers of meaning in their lives, in search of their own identity and place in the modern, fragmented world. They are both disconnected not only from their countries but from the time they are living in, and believe this to be the reason for their sense of being lost; Alex is convinced his future will be in America ("America is always proving itself greater than I thought" [109]), while Jonathan leaves America to search for his true roots in Ukraine: "I want to see Trachimbrod ... To see what it's like, how my grandfather

grew up, where I would be now if it weren't for the war" (59). To Lukács the notion of time becomes vital in the novel genre; time flows through the events of the novel and shows that "all this had to come from somewhere, must be going somewhere; even if the direction betrays no meaning, it is a direction none the less" (Lukács 124). Lukács's ideas of the emptiness of the present, and the essence of things existing in the hope of the future as well as in the memory of the past are strongly brought out in *Everything Is Illuminated*; it affects the way the two men construct their narratives and thus their identities as well. Jonathan looks for meaning by searching the past, first in Ukraine with Alex and then in his own narration by describing his ancestors' lives—he doesn't even refer to the present or himself but leaves that for Alex to write about. Meanwhile, to Alex the essence and meaning of life lie in the hopes of the future, not in the past. His only goal is to save enough money to travel to America, which to him equals the land of dreams and hopes. Because of this ideal he is tremendously excited about meeting Jonathan ("I made shit of a brick because he was an American, and I desired to show him that I too could be an American" [28]) and constantly asks questions about his country ("Tell me about things that you have in America ... how much currency would an accountant receive in America? [69-70])—and it also becomes the reason why Alex feels so honored to write for Jonathan's book: "It is a mammoth honor for me to write for a writer; especially when he is an American writer, like Ernest Hemingway or you" (24). In contrary to Jonathan, Alex sees his family and older generations as representing the past and present he wants to escape: "My friends are appeased to stay in Odessa for their entire lives. They are appeased to age like their parents ...

OK, but this is not for me" (28). The only one he seems to care for in his family is the one with his future ahead of him; namely his little brother, Igor, whom Alex wishes to rescue by escaping with him to the US. These notions of time, however, begin to change through the course of the novel as the writing process comes to affect Alex's views on identity and narration.

CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITIES THROUGH NARRATION

Although Alex and Jonathan can be seen as seekers of meaning in their lives, what is more important is their ultimate failure in this search. According to Lukács, the novel's heroes are seekers but not necessarily finders; there is no guarantee of finding something significant and meaningful in life within the novel whose "very matter is seeking and failing to find the essence" (McKeon 217). Alex and Jonathan start as two seekers of meaning in Ukraine, taking on the novel hero's role which Lukács describes, but as their search results in nothing and their discovery of meaning is doomed—they aren't able to find Jonathan's relatives and Alex realizes he won't ever travel to America—they take on a new role where they try to achieve meaning through the construction of their identities in the act of writing. The fact that their narrations are so different from one another reflects the different ways in which they understand and try to build their own identity.

Jonathan establishes this search for his own identity by creating a past he can relate to and try to understand. Although Jonathan's narration has its humorous—or rather, tragicomic—parts, the tone of his chapters is generally tragic; what is important in Jonathan's chapters is that he is not trying to make things better through narration, but is instead constructing his own incomplete

identity in relation to his ancestors' lives. After his visit to Ukraine, Jonathan has come to realize that there can be no sensible flow of time that could explain the hardships his relatives had to go through during the Holocaust, and therefore—ultimately - there can also be no coherent or satisfying meaning for him to find. Therefore Jonathan writes a past full of fantastical, sad, and absurd elements and characters; he has realized that happy endings would be a lie, more so than his obviously fictive accounts of his past relatives. Thus, Jonathan's story becomes truthful in the sense that it shows how unattainable true meaning is in Jonathan's own life; Jonathan's big realization is that his characters—his ancestors—are in the end just as lost as he is: "Brod's life was a slow realization that the world was not for her ... she would never be happy and honest at the same time" (79), "Like Yankel, she repeats things until they are true, or until she can't tell whether they are true or not" (87). Therefore, by imagining that his ancestors struggled with the same questions as he today, Jonathan comes to question Lukács's flow of time in his narration; Jonathan is able to relate to the past he makes up and see time as a continuum, but at the same time a sensible flow of time becomes an impossibility, since nothing has changed throughout the years.

In contrast to Jonathan, who is trying to face his feeling of estrangement by constructing his place in the world implicitly through narrating his family's history, Alex is very explicitly constructing and improving his own identity in the chapters where he describes their journey through Ukraine, starting with the description of himself: "Many girls want to be carnal with me in many good arrangements ... I am a very premium person to be with. I am homely, and also severely funny, and these are winning

things" (2). Unlike Jonathan, Alex strongly believes in the power of writing in order to change things for the better, and therefore he is very precise about what he wants and doesn't want to convey through his text—this can be easily seen in the comments he writes to Jonathan in the middle of his narration: "Please, Jonathan, I implore you never to exhibit this to one soul. I do not know why I am writing this here" (68). Indeed, what separates Alex so greatly from Jonathan as a narrator is that Alex wants to believe in the difference their texts can make; Alex's letters reveal that he doesn't understand why Jonathan won't let his relatives achieve happiness in his narration: "If I could utter a proposal, please allow Brod to be happy. Please. Is this such an impossible thing?" (143), and in addition he often appeals to Jonathan to rewrite his stories: "You could alter it, Jonathan ... Your novel is now verging on the war. It is possible" (145).

Consequently, this also becomes the reason why Alex's narration is characterized by comedy and unreliability. Alex wants to hold on to the notion that at least within literature they could believe in the search of meaning and construction of stable, concrete identities—at least in his narration Alex could truly be a carnally marvelous man with a great future ahead of him: "I think I manufacture these not-truths because it makes me feel like a premium person ... I relish writing for you so much. It makes it possible for me to be not like I am" (144)—just as Jonathan could construct an alternative, happy history to build a complete identity on. Alex tries to use comedy to hide the true tragedies they come to face during their journey in Ukraine, and he is deliberately unreliable because he believes he can thus change things for the better and create a more sensible flow of time through fiction. For the same

reasons Alex doesn't comprehend Jonathan's style of writing and repeatedly asks him to change his narration. As much as Alex wants the characters of Jonathan's story to find meaning and happiness in their lives, he wants his own chapters describing their search in Ukraine to be successful, too; after hours of futile search for Augustine, Alex interrogates the next woman they meet until she *becomes* Augustine, at least in his narration if not in reality: " 'No,' she said again ... 'Have you ever witnessed anyone in the photograph?' I inquired, and I felt cruel ... but I was certain that I was performing the right thing. 'No,' she said ... 'Has anyone in this photograph ever witnessed you?' ... 'Oh,' she said, and she released a river of tears. 'You are here. I am it' " (118). In addition, by altering reality through fiction, Alex hopes to secure his friendship with Jonathan; after finding out that Alex's grandfather was partly responsible for the death of his Jewish friend, Alex wants to create a different past which would enable him and Jonathan to be friends in the present despite the Holocaust which has now placed them on opposing sides (On a close analysis of Jonathan's and Alex's friendship, see Feuer).

Thus, Alex becomes what Lukács in his novel theory calls a 'disillusioned romantic'; a character in the novel genre whose soul is "wider and larger than the destinies which life has to offer" (McKeon 212) and who consequently creates his own, artistic reality: "here, a man can become the hero, the central figure of a literary work, because he has the inner possibility of experiencing life as a literary creator" (McKeon 215).

[Alex in one of his letters:] We are being very nomadic with the truth, yes? ... if we are to be such nomads with the truth, why do we not make the story more premium

than life? It seems to me that we are making the story even inferior ... I do not think that there are any limits to how excellent we could make life seem. (179-180)

At first Alex believes in this disillusionment and the power of writing—idolizing Jonathan for being an author—but the closer they get to the inevitably sad endings of their narrations the more restrained and melancholy the once extravagant Alex becomes. As Lukács points out, creating a more adequate world than the existing one artistically is only an illusionary solution: "Life becomes a work of literature; but, as a result, man becomes the author of his own life and at the same time the observer of that life as a created work of art," leading to "the certainty of failure...the romanticism becomes skeptical, disappointed and cruel towards itself and the world" (McKeon 215). Thus, towards the end of the text, a significant change happens in Alex's narration; as he comes to realize that Jonathan will respond neither to his dreams of building a friendship, nor to Alex's requests for changing his narration in order to reach a happier ending, Alex starts to lose hope in his own narration as well—he begins to realize that he cannot find meaning or establish a stable identity for himself even through narration. Towards the end of the novel, Alex's comedy turns into a postmodern, fragmented, stream-of-consciousness tragedy as Alex is forced to break away from his disillusionment and repeat his grandfather's devastating story of the Holocaust: "I murdered Herschel, he [Alex's grandfather] said. Or what I did was as good as murdering him...Herschel I thought Herschel must escape how can he escape he must run now run into the darkness...I am so afraid of dying I am so afraid of dying...I held him with so much force that he cried because I loved him so much that I made love im-

possible” (247-251). Memories that have been repressed for decades take their form in Alex’s narration in a distorted style; words are smashed together and obsessively repeated over and over again to portray the horrors of the Holocaust.

Therefore, in the end, Alex’s initial ideas about finding meaning and establishing one’s own identity are completely reversed and instead he comes to question the whole writing process, which has only turned into a way of conveying his and Jonathan’s estrangement in the world. As Alex points out, he and Jonathan have become the same voice: “We are talking now, Jonathan, together, and not apart. We are with each other, working with the same story ... Do you know ... that I am Kolker and you are Brod ... that I am you and you are me?” (214). No matter what their strategies are, they are both just as out of place, simultaneously in and out of this world. Ultimately, in the end of *Everything Is Illuminated*, the idea of a sensible flow of time becomes questioned through Alex’s grandfather’s suicide: “[Alex’s grandfather in his suicide letter:] They must begin again. They must cut all of the strings ... with everything they have known” (275). And yet, the reader will never know if Alex’s grandfather actually killed himself in order to free Alex and Jonathan from the past, because Jonathan receives this information through a suicide letter which (the unreliable) Alex has translated for him - so that in the end, whether Alex’s grandfather really committed suicide or not, it is Alex, through translation and narration, who attempts to force the flow of time to stop.

THE READER’S ROLE AND THE SELF-AWARENESS OF THE NOVEL

After analyzing how the narrative voices in *Everything Is Il-*

luminated portray the different ways in which Alex and Jonathan deal with the construction of identities and search for meaning in their lives, it is time to return to the questions raised earlier concerning the third narrative, Alex’s letters, and how the letters work together with the other chapters of the text. What are the functions of commenting on the writing process, revealing unreliability and drawing attention to the notion of implied authors in the context of the entire novel? These issues can be best clarified by discussing first how the narrative structure of the text affects the reader’s role.

As a result of the three narrative levels, the role of the reader becomes increasingly complex in *Everything Is Illuminated*; as soon as the reader adapts to one position and narration, he is yet again tricked and forced to question everything he has read so far, mainly because of the way Alex in his letters continually deconstructs what he and Jonathan have previously written in their chapters. The reader immerses in the narration of Jonathan and Alex as easily and gladly as he is shocked by its artificiality once Alex starts writing his letters. In his book *Experiencing Fiction*, James Phelan divides the interpretation of narratives into three different categories: mimetic, thematic, and synthetic⁴ and the evaluation of these narratives into interpretive, ethical and aesthetic judgments⁵.

⁴ Phelan’s explanation of the different interpretations: “Responses to the mimetic component involve an audience’s interest in the characters as possible people and in the narrative world as like our own ... responses to the mimetic component include our evolving judgments and emotions...Responses to the thematic component involve an interest in the ideational function of the characters and in the cultural, ideological, philosophical, or ethical issues being addressed by the narrative. Responses to the synthetic component involve an audience’s interest in and attention to the characters and to the larger narrative as artificial constructs” (5-6)

⁵ Phelan’s explanation: “interpretive judgments about the nature of actions or other elements of the narrative, ethical judgments about the moral value of characters and actions, and aesthetic judgments about the artistic quality of the narrative and of its parts” (9)

Phelan emphasizes how texts usually invite the reader to focus on certain kinds of interpretations and judgments, while paying less attention to others (6), but in Foer's novel, due to its three narratives, all these different levels are addressed, therefore complicating the reader's role.

To point out just some examples: in Jonathan's chapters the mimetic and thematic interpretations become highlighted; the reader can relate to the different characters and their struggles, respond with his own desires and disappointments, and look for themes, such as the impossibility of finding one's own place in the world. In contrast, Alex's letters draw full attention to the synthetic components of the text; how it can be analyzed as an artificial construction and therefore also judged aesthetically in terms of the narration's artistic quality. Changes can happen within one type of interpretation or judgment, as well, for example in the case of ethical judging; at first Alex's chapters and his unreliability can cause the reader to view Alex in a negative ethical light, but by the time Alex's letters come to reveal more about the men's lives, this negativity can be targeted to Jonathan instead, since he does not respond to any of his friend's wishes and instead publishes all the personal material Alex specifically asks to keep to himself. In addition, the ethical questions in *Everything Is Illuminated* become even more complex because of the text's portrayal of Holocaust survivors and their extreme trauma.

However, what interpretations and judgments we make varies from one reader to another, but by realizing how the narrative structure complicates the reader's position, it is possible to understand that the fluidity of the reader's role is in fact tied to the text's bigger theme of constructing one's identity. Because of the

three changing narratives, the reader isn't allowed to build a stable role for himself but is instead forced to constantly change his position, attitude and judgments. Just like the characters in *Everything Is Illuminated* aren't able to establish stable identities for themselves—even through their own narration—the reader isn't able to establish a clear role during his reading process. In fact, through Alex's letters the physical reader's role and importance becomes occasionally completely questioned, as Alex takes on the role of the reader by analyzing and interpreting Jonathan's chapters: "I understand what you write when you write that Brod does not love Yankel. It does not signify that she does not feel volumes for him ... Love, in your writing, is the immovability of truth" (103). By analyzing Jonathan's text in this manner, Alex leaves the reader to question whether he has any role in the text after all.

Because of these fluid roles, one perspective to the issue of implied authors and what the text is saying as a whole would be to understand both Alex and Jonathan as trying to convey their own implicit messages—about the feeling of estrangement and longing for meaning—through their narratives, while, at the same time, the implied author on the level of the entire text is telling a story about the impossibility of building a stable identity for one's self in the postmodern world where we have become so self-aware of the search for lost meaning that we end up trying to construct that search ourselves. However, in addition to this theme, there is another aspect that the narrative structure and especially Alex's letters brings out; by complicating all the different parts and roles involved in the novel—those of the readers, narrators, implied authors and physical authors—*Everything Is Illuminated* turns attention to how self-aware it is of its own form as a novel. There are

in fact two levels of self-awareness and construction taking place in the text: on the level of the characters, with whom the readers can thus relate to in their search for meaning and identity, and on the level of the novel as a part of a genre, thus questioning its traditional structures and roles.

In other words, if we look at novels in terms of Lukács' theory, seeing them as a genre which portrays its heroes as seekers looking for unattainable meaning, then *Everything Is Illuminated* breaks apart from this tradition and reaches a higher level of self-reflectivity both in terms of its content and form. On the level of content, its heroes have become so self-aware of their task of searching for meaning that they end up constructing that search themselves, and on the level of the form, in Alex's and Jonathan's chapters the text first constructs an autobiographical⁶ novel form, only to be then pulled apart and analyzed thoroughly in Alex's letters. The content and form of the novel need to be discussed together in order to understand their significance; there is nothing surprising per se about Jonathan writing the story of his ancestors out of his imagination, while Alex deliberately enhances the story of their travels to make it more entertaining—the role of fiction is, after all, to build stories and invent events in order to make them tellable. However, what is surprising in *Everything Is Illuminated* is the focus on, and illumination of, this construction. In his letters Alex explicitly admits all of his lies—or “not-truths” as he calls them (144)—and at the same time reveals how Jonathan is invent-

⁶ In his theory of the novel, Lukács argues that the novel as a genre has a highly architectural construction, something always “in process of becoming” (195). The novel is only meaningful as an autobiographical form, when its parts are in relation to the hero's quest and life: “the discretely heterogeneous mass of isolated persons, non-sensuous structures and meaningless events receives a unified articulation by the relating of each separate element to the central character and the problem symbolized by the story of his life” (200)

ing his past. Thus, as Alex's letters draw attention to the text's own construction and the form of the novel as a whole, in consequence on the level of the content the flow of events constituting the hero's search is illuminated, broken down into pieces and invented by the hero himself, making not only the meaning impossible to reach but its coherent search as well.

Therefore, *Everything Is Illuminated* shows how difficult it is to have a real search for meaning in a world where we have become too self-aware of our role as seekers—and this cruel self-awareness is the true homelessness and helplessness of today's heroes instead of the transcendental homelessness Lukács describes. Tying this back to the reader's role; by shining a light on its own construction and the hopelessness and fictionality of the heroes' search, the responsibility of creating an illusion of fiction shifts from the narrator (or the author) to the reader in *Everything Is Illuminated*. The novel questions its own existence and the significance of the search for meaning, leaving the reader with the burden of trying to trick himself into believing what he reads. This attempt of tricking oneself is, however, doomed to fail, when the construction and artificiality of fiction are so clearly revealed, forcing the reader to constantly re-establish his role and judgments. It might be easier to believe in the fictive stories of Alex's and Jonathan's search for identities, just like we would sometimes like to believe in the fictive stories we create of ourselves, but as this option is taken away it both hurts the reader and makes him laugh—it both distances and bonds the text with its reader. And yet, isn't that the purpose of literature? Novels as constantly developing through their self-reflectiveness and self-parody—at least according to Russian formalists—in order to estrange us from the world we have grown

too familiar with, and to make us see it from a new perspective, no matter how painful it is. In the end of *Everything Is Illuminated*, everything becomes illuminated except a meaningful flow of time and a true connection between the past, present and future; in today's world identity and meaning have to be self-consciously constructed and it is this tragicomic, never-ending process of constructing that Foer's novel portrays.

CONCLUSION

Through a complex narrative structure, *Everything Is Illuminated* conveys messages and meanings to the reader on multiple levels. Through different narrative styles—one of unreliability and comedy, the other of openly fantastical elements and tragedy—Alex and Jonathan as narrators convey their own implicit messages about the feeling of estrangement and longing for meaning in their lives. At the same time, on the level of the entire text, the implied author is telling a story about the impossibility of constructing a stable identity for one's self in today's fragmented world. Furthermore, by adding a third narrative to the structure of the text through Alex's letters, the novel also highlights its own role as a part of the novel genre; *Everything Is Illuminated* becomes self-aware both in terms of its content and form, thus questioning the traditional roles of a novel and leaving the reader trying to both follow all the tricks the novel poses on him and, ultimately, trick himself into believing what he is reading.

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SAVANNAH EULER

Savannah is a senior majoring in Humanities with concentrations in art and critical writing, and a minor in art history. She enjoys crème brûlée and all forms of *Gone with the Wind*. Someday she will curate for the Louvre, and look at pretty sculptures all day long.

NOMAD Prize for Excellence in Undergraduate Scholarship:

Honorable Mention

Mentor: **Amy Leggette**

BERNINI AND THE

TENSION OF THE TROMPE L'OEIL

In the sculptures of Gian Lorenzo Bernini, eroticism is a subtle, yet palpable affair. It becomes a vehicle allowing the viewer to experience the erotic act rather than only being a passive viewer. This eroticism, portrayed through various elements and techniques, is an aspect of Bernini's work which allows him to slip sexuality into arenas of life where it had not previously been so blatantly displayed. Bernini showcases the act of eroticism in a

way his contemporaries had not yet explored—focusing not on overt sexuality or suggestion, but palpable human emotion.

I will be approaching the concept of tension and its resulting anxiety from a Freudian perspective, which focuses on anxiety as a result of apprehension or discomfort. In what is perhaps Freud's most famous book, *The Pleasure Principle*, he writes that, "Our conscious conveys to us from within not only the sensations of pleasure and 'pain', but also those of a peculiar tension, which again may manifest as pleasure or pain itself." (Freud, 82) This is the nature of the tension I will be speaking of, which manifests into a mixture of pleasure and pain within the context of the eroticism created by Bernini. The resulting anxiety is aroused by apprehension or discomfort (Freud, 7) and this apprehension is provoked by the sculptures themselves. Freud's notion of tension is the step preceding anxiety, essentially becoming the conceptual stepping stone in the creation of Bernini's eroticism.

Bernini harnesses this tension to express something deeper and more human within his sculptures. This deliberate manipulation of form creates a space for Bernini which is free from political consequence. This subtle mix of religious or mythological imagery resulting in extreme eroticism is achieved through the use of *trompe l'oeil*, a French term meaning 'trick of the eye'. Typically within an art historical context the term *trompe l'oeil* is only applied to architecture and painting. In the instance of painting, it is used to describe two-dimensional images appearing to be three-dimensional, and in architecture it functions in the same way except the 2D space blends into the 3D space without the eye being able to differentiate. *Trompe l'oeil* essentially functions to create another dimension which did not previously exist, allowing the eye to see what is not actually

physically there. However, the term should not be restricted to flat surfaces and a two-dimensional trick and thus I will be applying it to Bernini's sculpture as a deliberate artistic technique. Utilizing the term strictly based on its definition—trick of the eye—this trick can exist in all areas of art. The dimension that *trompe l'oeil* brings to art that is *already* 3D is time. Time is essentially the fourth-dimension in these instances, and allows for the viewer to place the sculpture they're seeing in their own reality. Because of this placement in the physical world, the eye is unable to differentiate between what is being seen and its general conception of reality. The motion and feeling of transformation which is embedded in Bernini's sculpture creates time, and brings a 4th dimension into these still sculptures. I am taking *trompe l'oeil* one step further, allowing it to bring deeper dimension into art work which already exists in 3D, truly tricking the eye into seeing reality where only sculpture exists.

Eroticism is a vehicle used to stir and provoke the viewer, creating an experience that goes beyond passive viewing. While eroticism can be confused with sexuality, it is much more complex and creates an emotional experience within the viewer. Sexuality and nudity are common themes in sculpture, but these sexual situations do not constitute eroticism. Erotic art creates a connection to the viewer that surpasses simply seeing an image that has sexual subject. Eroticism can exist in works that have no obvious sexuality. It is the upheaval of sexual emotions in the viewer that create a sense of eroticism. Lust, fear, desire, and sensuality are feelings that can be missing from images of a sexual nature, and it is the stirring and communication of these emotions that create a palpable eroticism.

I will be focusing on the sculptures that constitute the most arresting selections from Bernini's sculptural portfolio. *The Ecstasy*

of *St. Theresa of Avila* (1645), *The Rape of Persopina* (1622), and *Apollo & Daphne* (1625), will be the basis for my examination of Bernini's erotic technique and erotic imagery. Combining formal tension achieved through composition, the psychological response of anxiety to this tension, and *trompe l'oeil*, Bernini creates sculptures that are palpable in their eroticism. The significance of this technique is clear in comparison to ancient sculpture—such as Michelangelo's *David*, which exists merely in its formal composition. There is little emotional connection, and it does not convey any sense of time or reality. This lack of connection creates an experience for the viewer which is flat, and the sculpture can only be appreciated for the beauty of its compositional surface. Bernini becomes significant because he surpasses sculptures from preceding eras, which rely only on compositional form and embeds his sculpture with real human emotion, allowing the viewer to connect to the work and place it in their own reality.

Bernini utilizes many technical and conceptual tricks in creating his sculpture. His most common and effective is a refinement of the classical style of *trompe l'oeil*. From a technical standpoint, *trompe l'oeil* is the technique utilized to give the illusion of reality where it does not exist, embedding another dimension into a piece of work. Bernini essentially crafts his own framework for the use of *trompe l'oeil*, moving away from common interpretations and tricking the eye into seeing movement and time—essentially creating a fourth-dimension. In this way Bernini moves into the realm of time and reality, creating a piece of sculpture that is multi-dimensional and can be viewed in this way. It is this signature *trompe l'oeil* that gives the sculptures life and interest, instead of allowing them to exist only as compositional forms. Having already established

himself as a magnificent sculptor of basic form, which is clear in earlier sculptures such as *Aeneas, Anchises, and Ascanius* completed in 1619, it became essential to embed his characters with a sense of life and movement. With this sense of movement comes tension, born from the strain between a medium that is by nature lifeless being portrayed as if animated. Bernini captures this, harnessing tension created by composition rather than subject matter, and manipulates it for the benefit of the viewing experience. His work in honor of St. Theresa exemplifies how sexual tension can be created in a seemingly non-sexual subject to create a specific experience for the viewer that is completely unexpected. Bernini embeds his works with a sense of sexuality that cannot be achieved through less complex and dimensional compositions which do not connect with the viewer. *St. Theresa of Avila, The Rape of Persopina, and Apollo & Daphne* are all by the nature of their history and mythology erotic figures, but this eroticism is more than visual. Their sexuality comes from formal tension, and eroticism is created by combining both compositional form and uncomfortable content to create anxiety in the viewer. This anxiety is a reaction to the formal tension, which essentially translates into eroticism within the framework of the sculptures' narratives.

Bernini's *The Ecstasy of St. Theresa of Avila* is the most underhandedly erotic of all of Bernini's sculpture. It was commissioned as a religious sculpture to pay tribute to the newly sanctified sainthood of Theresa, a visionary nun, and was created specifically for the Cornaro Chapel. St. Theresa's story could be seen a number of ways—from a religious or an erotic perspective—and Bernini manages to represent both of these interpretations in his representation of her. The scene itself was lifted out of St. Theresa's own diaries, where she

writes;

I did see an angel, not far from me toward my left hand, in corporal form... He was not great, but little, very beautiful, his face so glorious that he seemed to be one of the higher angels, which seem to be all enflamed... I did see in his hand a long dart of gold, and at the end of the iron head it seemed to have a little fire, this he seemed to pass through my heart sometimes, and sometimes that it pierced into my entrails, which I thought he drew from me, when he pulled it out again he left me wholly enflamed in the great love of God... (Weibel, 79)

This first-hand account suggests an erotic act hidden within a religious experience. In Bernini's sculpture, St. Theresa is represented writhing in the ecstasy of divine love. Her head is thrown back, eyes half-open and mouth parted as she experiences the moment she is pierced by the angels' arrow. Her breath is halted and her ecstasy is marked in the glazed look of her eyes—truly a moment of physical bliss. The angel poised above her smiles menacingly as he thrusts his golden spear into her heart. However, due to Bernini's use of subtle eroticism, the sexual nature of this sculpture may not be entirely apparent upon first glance. St. Theresa's body is almost entirely covered by her gown—majestically flowing and pleating around her, she is nearly formless, entirely swallowed by her garment. For the viewer, this becomes the first sign of formal tension within the sculpture. Unable to see the feminine form underneath, the viewer must imagine the arch and curve of her body. Bernini gives us slight clues to the nature of her body, strategically posing her head, hands, and feet to appear uncomfortable—tense—underhandedly implying sexual ecstasy. These features are also striking in



Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *The Ecstasy of St. Theresa of Avila*, 1645

their nakedness, for they are the only bit of flesh allowed to be seen. For the viewer her body would subsequently follow these visual cues. However, because this is only implied and not visually apparent there is a tension that develops in the unknown nature of her hidden body. Bernini is tricking the viewer in this way, employing his own signature *trompe l'oeil* which forces the eye to ignore what it is actually seeing and tricking it into viewing what is implied. Be-

cause of this there is no definite answer as to whether it is an erotic sculpture or not, and this obscurity tricks the viewer into filling in the blanks; the tension that is born from the implications of the sculpture leads to viewer to visualize and experience the erotic act taking place. This trick acts as somewhat of a safety net for Bernini, making it so the Catholic Church would be unable to directly criticize him for the sexual nature of the work. Because the erotic act exists only in implication, Bernini was largely uncriticized for the work; except for an anonymously written diatribe written not long after the sculptures unveiling. To this anonymous author “the most innocent of saints had been deceived by the sculptor . . . representing her in the heaven of Venus and subject to something less than spiritual passion.”(Bauer, 8) However, the author of this diatribe is largely thought to be an art critic rather than someone speaking on behalf of the Church and may have had a personal vendetta against the sculptor. Because the erotic act is hidden in this sculpture, its “discovery” can be entirely blamed on the viewers’ interpretation if necessary, providing a safeguard of Bernini’s flourishing religiously-funded career. In regarding and experiencing this work, the viewer is active and not passive—he or she is implicated in the interpretation of the work, and this implicative feeling is purposely created by Bernini.

This voyeurism is mirrored in the upper flanks of the sculpture, which encompasses an entire wall of the chapel. On the upper right side sit four sculpted men who watch Theresa from box seats similar to an opera house. The men gaze down intently at the woman below, mimicking the voyeuristic nature of the viewer—essentially multiplying and reflecting their gaze. They symbolize the intrusion that viewing necessitates, and also bring the viewer into the work as

an active element. Tension develops further in the implication of the viewer within the sculpture, and this tension manifests itself in anxiety. With this minute detail Bernini is acknowledging that the act of viewing is intruding upon an intensely erotic and personal moment, and this intrusion further develops the tension and anxiety which is so apparent in the imagined body of Theresa. Eroticism builds from these various elements, combining the compositional tension of her imagined form, the sexuality of the implied act and the anxiety of being implicated as a voyeuristic element of the sculpture. Bernini is questioning the difference between religious love and sexual desire with *The Ecstasy of St. Theresa of Avila*, blurring the lines between what constitutes erotic imagery and religious imagery. This work pushes the viewer to confront these questions, acting as a force of provocation to straddle the boundaries of what is acceptable in a sacred context.

Much of Bernini’s work also focuses on sacred Greek mythology, showing myths which by nature of their legend are rich in blatant sexuality and eroticism. However, sex and sexual suggestion does not always constitute eroticism, and simply showing figures in a sexually suggestive composition do not create the desired sense of eroticism. Bernini once again uses tension to develop sensuality and eroticism in his mythological narratives. We see that the sexual nature of these narratives do not constitute eroticism or create the desired erotic effect. Basic sexual representation and eroticism become two very different things in these instances, with the basic representation of sexual content failing to actively engage the viewer in the way that an erotic sculpture would.

Otto J. Brendel, contributing writer to *Studies in Eroticism*, writes that sexuality is the “nature of the Gods” and “confirms the

sexual bipolarism of nature, of common experience, thereby sustaining all life on earth. It is, however, a meeting of principals rather than of persons. Obviously such a manner of thinking is better served by abstract symbols than by natural representations.” (Brendel, 7) A meeting of abstract principus is devoid of eroticism in that it is devoid of a humanistic element and is essentially formless. It exists only the realm of reproductive sex and metaphor. Prior to Bernini, much sculpture of the Baroque period relied heavily on ‘natural representations’—that is, simple sexual representation. Nothing is implied, sex and sexuality are apparent and obvious to the viewer. It is Bernini who takes Greek mythological narrative to the level of true eroticism, infusing them with a human aspect which makes them accessible and relevant to the viewer. The sculpture *Apollo & Daphne*, created in Bernini’s early youth, is a prime example of the duality of nature which Brendel writes. It is a concrete form which symbolizes the dualism of sexuality and eroticism in the “nature” of the Gods, and is infused with this eroticism through tension and anxiety.

Apollo & Daphne is based on the moment when the god Apollo attempts to seize the flying nymph Daphne just as she begins to morph into a laurel tree. The myth explains that Apollo was struck by an obsessive love for the nymph, while in turn Daphne was struck with total disgust for the god. Frustrated with his unobtainable conquest, he essentially attempts to capture and rape her. The moment Bernini chose to depict is a mere fraction of the moment she turns into the tree in order to escape his aggressive pursuit. By nature, this myth is sexualized—Apollo is in love with Daphne and is taut with sexual desire. Formal tension exemplifies Daphne’s extraordinary transformation. Bernini utilizes his signature trompe



Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Apollo and Daphne*, 1625

l’oeil technique, which creates a 4th dimension through time in his portrayal of movement and transformation. This piece is not still, and does not necessarily depict one specific scene. Daphne exists in one specific moment of total transformation, her upraised hands already covered with twigs instead of fingers while her entire lower body takes root in the ground, twisting into foliage. Her transformation is difficult to pinpoint—she truly is half human and half tree,

depicting both a physical movement and a transformational change. Her face is filled with fear in her desperate pursuit to escape her assailant, who appears light and nimble, his strategically placed drapery flowing airily behind him. Although the mythological narrative is of an extremely sexual nature, the formal tension which comes from deliberate posing and its subsequent anxiety develops into eroticism which is disconnected from the sexuality of the story. The sexual narrative is not important, what is important is the tension between the two figures and how the transformation and movement of the figures coupled with the clear sexuality within the sculpture create eroticism.

There is a strange juxtaposition between viewing a static piece of sculpture in a state of transformation and motion. This odd visual trompe l'oeil creates tension in the perception of motion in total stillness. Daphne is straddling two different states of being, and this pull between two different worlds—that of humans and of nature—causes the viewer to feel somewhat disoriented, anxious, and once again involved in the erotic act. This duality of being mimics Brendel's idea of sexual bipolarism, which is also reflected in Apollo's lust and Daphne's abhorrence. This sculpture exhibits both sides of the spectrum—that of love and that of hate—and both contribute to the eroticism of the sculpture. Apollo, obsessed and burning with desire chases after Daphne who is full of formal tension and anxiety in her transformation. She is only concerned with escape, creating a sense of fear and anticipation in the urgency of her transformation. This anticipation, combined with Apollo's desire manifests as tension, moving away from the overtly sexual nature of Apollo's intent and into eroticism that mimics the desire, fear, and anxiety within the narrative characters. This sculpture is also significant in that it

must be viewed 'in-the-round'; that is, from different perspectives it shows entirely different views of Daphne. There is no singular view in which to interpret the actions of the narrative, instead the viewer must essentially mesh and experience the various viewpoints in order to truly take in the entirety of the sculpture. There is an ambiguousness that exists in not having a concrete view of the work, as every view showcases Daphne in different stages of transformation. From the front, she appears more human—at the beginning of her transformation, with only a few leaves sprouting from her fingers. From an anterior perspective she is almost entirely a tree, her hair appearing as total foliage and her legs turn to roots and bark in the ground. A sense of anticipation comes from these opposing views. The viewer wants to see the transformation in its entirety, see her front begin to match her back. The viewer begins to feel anxious in their anticipation of her final transformation, as if waiting for the sculpture to truly come to life and become a laurel tree. The anxiety that Daphne is feeling in her desire to escape, combined with Apollo's sexual desire and Bernini's mastery compositional form creates a sculpture that transcends simple sexuality, and becomes an experience of the act of eroticism as well as transformation for the viewer.

Overt sexual imagery moves to a more visceral and violent level in *The Rape of Proserpina*. This work depicts Pluto abducting Proserpina with the intent to rape her. Once again we see a frightening display of desire and sexuality, focusing in on the aggression of Pluto to seize and control Proserpina. This is the most human of Bernini's sculptures, as there is no fantastical element to the figures—no laurel trees or angelic beings—devoid of their mythological status they have the characteristics of real humans. The figures are fleshy and shown in their entirety, except for a small strip of fabric. They



Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *The Rape of Persopina*, 1622

are situated stable on the earth, and Pluto's muscles show strain from struggling to subdue Proserpina. There is nothing that clearly marks them as supernatural beings. The tension of this sculpture is specifically born from Proserpina's fear, which is clear and apparent on her face and her tension is a formal and intentional aspect of the composition. She struggles frantically to flee Pluto, who grips her violently. This grip is the most profound representation of Bernini's



Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *The Rape of Persopina*, 1622

manipulation of form and trompe l'oeil. The marble is given the illusion of being supple flesh, malleable and yielding to the hard violent grip of Pluto. The illusion of flesh when the material is actually cold, hard marble becomes a source of formal tension for the viewer, who cannot reconcile that what they are seeing is not soft malleable skin. The fear and tension between the two figures also translates to the viewer, who beings to feel Proserpina's fear and desperation

which is apparent on her face. Her body is twisted manically, her head tilting away from her assailant and eyes looking desperately into the distance. Her mouth opens just enough to let out a silent scream. These two figures are entwined in a dance of tension, with Pluto desperate to control and possess and Proserpina desperate to flee. These conflicting interests are shown clearly in the specific posing of the figures, and the tension between the two translates the viewer. This feeling of anxiety, coupled with the fleshy perfection of the forms and Pluto's violent sexual desire erupts into an unsettling sense of erotic tension. There is another visual juxtaposition in the yielding of Proserpina's form to Pluto's grasp. She is struggling to get away from him, clearly fearful and trying to flee. However, the nature of the marble material betrays Proserpina and gives in to the hand of Pluto. Once again, the viewer is not entirely able to reconcile that what they're seeing is not flesh, and they empathize and relate more intensely to Proserpina's struggle. This essentially places the viewer within the erotic act, allowing them to become a part of the sculptural narrative rather than only a passive viewer. This is not eroticism based out of pleasure, but rather out of fear, and this fear is clearly communicated and becomes palpable to the viewer. Eroticism can exist in a place where sex is a source of fear and not pleasure—and *The Rape of Proserpina* embodies this notion.

In understanding the sculptures of Bernini it is pivotal to take them for more than what they appear to be in photographs. The successes of his sculptures are in the ability to implicate and involve the viewer in the erotic acts portrayed, essentially destroying the dividing curtain between object and viewer. Bernini redefines traditional trompe l'oeil to suit his artistic visions in these three sculptures. The technique no longer exists to merely trick the eye

into seeing something that isn't there, but to contribute to the tension and overall feeling of the sculpture. With Bernini, trompe l'oeil becomes a conceptual element rather than a strictly compositional one. Using trompe l'oeil in the development of eroticism allows for a feeling that is visceral to the viewer. Bernini separates his sculptures away from common notions of sexuality, especially in *The Ecstasy of St. Theresa of Avila*, which exists in and was commissioned by the typically prudish environment of the Catholic Church. This work revels in its combination of religion and sexuality, and becomes significant not only for its masterful craftsmanship but for its interaction with the viewer. Eroticism is achieved without any formal sexual clues, allowing the viewer to essentially fill in the blanks of Theresa's story. With *Apollo & Daphne* Bernini does not focus on the sexual narrative to achieve eroticism, but rather develops it through movement. The tension and anticipation of transformation becomes the building block for the transmission of this erotic act to the viewer, allowing anxiety to be the driving force into eroticism. With *The Rape of Proserpina* we are immediately thrown into the erotic act through our connection to these two forms that seem to be human, their flesh malleable and realistic. This is a beautiful trompe l'oeil, and the tension that comes from reconciling what is seen is actually marble and not flesh manifests into eroticism when combined with the tension of Proserpina's fear. What can be taken from Bernini's artistry is that sexuality does not always have to be obvious in art; in fact, it is better if it is not. The subtle uses of sexuality to merely hint at eroticism allow more important aspects of the sculptures to take center stage. The emotional aspect of these sculptures is what allows the viewer to become so entranced and to experience the erotic act rather than just viewing it, truly becoming a part of the erotic act.

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MONICA CERSETO

Monica Cereseto will be a Comparative Literature graduate this June. Her academic interests include film analysis, research and archival, Italian literature, and literary theory. Monica's essay explores the function and capabilities of 3D technologies in cinema grounding her argument in critical art and psychoanalytical theory.

NOMAD Prize for Excellence in Undergraduate Scholarship:
Honorable Mention

Mentor: **Baran Germen**

3D FUNTIONALITY IN THE MEANING OF CINEMA

Many advancements in technology and technique within the arts—whether they be visual, literary, or aural—have been developed and used for the purpose of reflecting or representing reality as closely as possible. As in the case of the phonograph, camera obscura, or color in film, these technological advancements aim at verisimilitude to trick an audience into believing that the events or objects presented are actually physically

existing there before them. 3D technology in film has come into fashion multiple times throughout the last century. The advent of 3D cinema began in the late 1890's but was not feasible for theatrical exposition (for the mechanisms necessary to view the film would allow only one viewer at a time) until the 1920s. The early 1950s experienced a 3D film craze with films such as *The House of Wax*, but their popularity declined as the necessity of two prints being projected simultaneously made screenings difficult. After a fledgling period, in the beginning in of the 1990s, with IMAX's endorsement, more and more films began to be produced in 3D. Now there are many films produced in the 3D format in contemporary Hollywood cinema, yet most are considered to be inconsequential in terms of serious artistic, cinematic production.

But as with all film technologies, 3D can be utilized where it functions *for* the film instead of being the function *of* the film. Its use can reach beyond simply showcasing itself for the amazement of the audience. This, though, depends on the way the spectator experiences the technology and relates to the diegetic world, which is the entire realm created by and within a film.

3D technology can be applied in ways with which it immerses viewers into the cinematic production. It has the capability of contributing to the artistic function of a film, if it does not distract viewers from immersing themselves into the diegetic world. To be fully immersed into the diegetic world of a film, viewers must comfortably disavow the fact that the events they are watching are not actually occurring before them as the images move across the screen. 3D technology can be utilized where it functions *for* the film so long as the apparatus does not distract the audience with its existence. While advancements in film at once make the diegetic world easier

to believe in as real, they simultaneously nod to the fact that these techniques are covering up the absence of the real. This process relates to the act of disavowal taken from psychoanalytical theory and the concept of the cinematic apparatus. Disavowing the apparatus is the process by which the viewer is able to become immersed into the film and accept the diegetic world as real.

Disavowal is rooted in psychoanalysis specifically relating to castration anxiety. An individual symbolically covers the lack (in the classic sense, the mother's lack of a penis) to remain at ease. In the cinema, a viewer disavows the fact that the events on screen are in truth illusions created by the apparatus, which is composed of the varying mechanisms contributing to the creation of a film such as the camera and crew. When viewers yield to disavowal, they accept the diegetic world as real, letting the events in the work unfold as if they are really taking place before them. As earlier stated, film technologies, like that of 3D, can have a double-sided effect whereby they can either contribute to or inversely weaken viewers' disavowal of the apparatus. Although 3D technology can be applied in ways which alienate viewers from a cinematic production, it is also capable of immersing viewers into the diegetic world on-screen because the mode by which a spectator views a film is dependent on the intention and utilization of filmic technology and the manner in which it is presented.

To fully understand the process by which 3D can either enhance or detract from the subject of a film, it would be helpful to discuss disavowal in the cinema in more detail. Christian Metz specifically discusses the cinema's relation to psychoanalysis and disavowal of the apparatus in "Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema". Metz describes how viewers disavow the part of them

that¹ understands what is happening on the screen is not actually happening in order to watch a film with voyeuristic pleasure; they momentarily believe the scenes to be unfolding before them as if they are actually occurring in that moment. This renders a pleasurable viewing experience as the viewers feel as if they are looking in on a private world that does not know of their gazes. Simultaneously these viewers are disavowing that part of them that believes what is happening before them is in truth happening; they do this to maintain a correct perception of reality both in and out of the theater. While watching a film, viewers are constantly balancing the tension between these two opposing sides of belief and disbelief.

Metz founds his argument on the mythic audience at the first film viewing of *Train Arriving at a Station*, screened by the Lumière Brothers—a film simply portraying a train running along its tracks at an axial angle to the screen, pulling into a station platform. According to the legend, the audience believed the train to be real and ran out of the theater in hopes of not being run over. He explains that within modern viewers there is an aspect of that first audience, a primitive consciousness that believes what they are seeing is real.

However, there is a lack of reality in the theater—what is happening on-screen is of course not really happening. The apparatus functions by covering this lack with its methods of mimesis (its technologies and maneuvers to make the diegetic world more realistic²), but all the while that covering signifies that there is a lack being artificially filled. Viewers unconsciously desire to believe that what they see is real and thusly want the apparatus to remain as

¹ Originating from, in his opinion, the famous credulous spectators at the first screening *Train Arriving at the Station*.

² such as continuity editing, sound, camera movement, special effects, color, etc.

unexposed as possible. But, viewers must know that in reality the events are not happening otherwise they would not have maintained a correct perception of reality. So at once the viewers must avow and disavow the apparatus. It is the work of the filmmakers and the technologies they use to make it as easy to disavow the apparatus as possible for any sane audience that consciously enters a theater knows that the events projected on screen are part of the production they came to see.

The more real the diegetic world seems, the easier it is for viewers to disavow the apparatus and let the film unfold before them with ease. But, if too obvious, these technologies, like 3D filming, can create the opposite effect as they evidence the apparatus as the obvious producer of those effects. To examine a film like *Hugo* and its author, Martin Scorsese's use of 3D filming, it is important to look at the way film technologies have evolved in cinema history and how audiences' visual comprehensions evolved with them. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" Walter Benjamin describes the evolution of technological advancement in the art world. According to Benjamin, this evolution creates a cultural environment within which general audiences' visual syntaxes must evolve to visually comprehend these new art forms. Benjamin describes the way in which humans' visual comprehensions adapt to the speed of moving film and the speed of edited shots. The viewers became accustomed to "... the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go traveling" (Benjamin 236). Once manipulation of editing progressed the masses' visual understanding of film and this process became normalized in cinematic productions, filmmakers began to use editing and cutting in a different way—using

these technologies to contribute to the film's artistic function.

This was able to happen only when the audience was not being distracted by the technology to the point where they were no longer immersed in the film. If following Tom Gunning's logic—that the astonishment at the first screening of *Train Arriving at a Station* derived from the awe inspired by the new technology of moving pictures—one can see that once viewers had adapted to watching a film with this startling technology, filmmakers were able to use it as a tool to their artistic imaginings. Easily paralleled to 3D technology's use in the cinema today, the idea of using technological, mimetic effects to function artistically within a work, without extracting viewers from the diegetic world by virtue of their acknowledgement of the apparatus, is certainly feasible. These effects can be used to not only function creatively within a work, but also to promote the disavowal of the apparatus.

Walter Benjamin describes the ways in which technology can be utilized to create the illusion of an apparatus-free event for the spectator in his same work. For viewers, the use of techniques (Benjamin refers specifically to 'cutting' or editing) creates the semblance of an apparatus-free event: "[The film's] illusionary nature is that of the second degree, the result of cutting. ... The equipment-free aspect of reality here has become the height of artifice..." (Benjamin 233). Film techniques of artifice, such as editing or 3D technology, assimilate viewers into the diegetic world by virtue of their facilitation with the disavowal of the apparatus, working on a second level with the film form to fully immerse viewers into a world of creation.

Before one can use a technology to function thematically or for the film's content, not just form, it cannot draw too much attention to itself by virtue of the apparatus. *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* is

a 2010 documentary in which renowned filmmaker Werner Herzog and partners at the History Channel take viewers to the exclusive Chauvet caves in Southern France showcasing the earliest pictorial creations in human history. Herzog and his colleagues use the technology where it does not distract viewers from the happenings in the diegetic world, rather it functions to immerse the audience into this 'cave of forgotten dreams'. Without 3D technology the filmmakers of *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* would not have been able to so fully exhibit the magical artistry hidden in these caves not available to be physically seen by the public. The effect of 3D in this film is almost entirely mimetic.

One short sequence in the film shows the filmmakers (the only people able to enter the cave by virtue of its small space) looking at a painting of a black bear on a convexly arched portion of the cave wall. The camera moves from their feet, sweeping up to the painting showing the dimensions of the cave space. The camera then moves over the bear, following the curves of the cave wall. In three-dimension, the viewer can fully partake in voyeuristic pleasure as he or she experiences the dimensionality of the surfaces the images were painted upon. The viewer discovers the black bear with the crew in that claustrophobic space. The 3D technology is not appropriated to be showcased, calling attention to it, but rather to showcase the caves and their ancient works.

Phil Fairclough, executive VP of development and production, describes to journalist Adrian Pennington how 3D performs the necessary function of providing the spatial dimension of the cave space and also the dimensionality of the cave walls, and the ancient paintings preserved upon them. "There's one place where there are lions painted on the side of a rock outcrop, but positioned as if hid-

ing and ready to pounce on rhino which are painted on another wall,” explains Fairclough, adding that “The artist has clearly used the topology of the cave to tell the story and filming it in 3D would show the artist’s intention”(Pennington). The filmmakers aim at using three-dimensionality to immerse the audience into the cave space, avoiding the direct recognition of the apparatus. The audience experiences first-hand the dimensionality and claustrophobia within the cave—a feat that would have been proven impossible with a two-dimensional film. While not explicitly functioning thematically for the film, Herzog and his colleagues were successful in exhibiting the cave paintings in a more real, engrossing way. The 3D technology is not appropriated to be showcased, calling attention to it, but instead used in a subtle way to showcase the caves and their ancient works.

Despite *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*’ and other 3D films’ successes, many do not function in such a way as to promote this disavowal of the apparatus. Before the visual literacy of the general audience evolves, film technologies are often treated as spectacle, showcased like a thrill at a carnival—much like how 3D is treated commonly today. Even after viewers become accustomed to a technology, filmmakers still use those technologies simply as the reason for the film’s creation. Instead of contributing to the subject of a film, the technology becomes the subject of the film. The relationship between the audience and the apparatus changes when technology functions like this in a production. The viewers do not partake in the diegetic world with the pleasure of voyeurs as earlier described; they watch the production with an eye constantly on the apparatus and the effects it has created.

In such productions, the technology calls attention to itself

instead of concealing the apparatus. In “An Aesthetics of Astonishment” Tom Gunning explains (as a reaction to Metz’s psychoanalytical approach to this event) that the shock during the first viewing of *Train Arriving at a Station* is derived from the magical metamorphosis from a still image of a train on-screen magically beginning to move along its tracks as the film began to play. “[R]ather than being a simple reality effect, the illusionistic arts of the nineteenth century cannily exploited their unbelievable nature, keeping a conscious focus on the fact that they were only illusions” explains Gunning (739). According to Gunning, the story of the historical audience’s astonishment was not a product of them being tricked into perceiving the train as real, but of being astounded by the new, astonishing technology (740). The reason they went to the screening was to see this new, startling art technology—there was no true surprise in seeing the image move. “This *coup de théâtre*, the sudden transformation from still image to moving illusion, startled audiences and displayed the novelty and fascination of the *cintematographe*” (Gunning 741). As the viewers who watch films produced for the purpose of showcasing 3D technology, the members of that first cinema audience were excited by the presentation of a new technology, not enveloped by it and its verisimilitude to a point where they believed the filmic events to be real.

3D productions of this variety in which case the sole function of the film is to exhibit the technology often exploit the three-dimensional aspect of filming. Instead of enhancing the content of the film, the technology becomes the centerpiece. One of many examples of this type of film would be the kind exhibited at amusement parks. As I recall from my family’s annual trips to Disneyland, I would venture into the exhibition theater in “Tomorrowland” to

watch *Honey I Shrank the Audience* in 3D. In this show, the lovable doctor Wayne Szalinski takes the audience to a science convention where he accidentally shrinks the audience with his new invention. The audience is then taken on a spectacular adventure, weaving in and out between gigantic feet, avoiding the doctor's curious dog, and having objects thrown out at them from the screen space. I remember the audience around me 'ooh-ing and aw-ing' at the wild effects of the 3D technology and reaching out at objects projecting from the screen into our faces—only to find empty air between our grasps. Overuse of the emergence effect (where a diegetic object in the film will enter the theater space) is one major aspect of *Honey I Shrank the Audience* and many other 3D films that directly imply the apparatus. One of many scenes employing this effect in *Honey I Shrank the Audience* involves a scientist starting up a machine that creates holograms of animals—in this case he creates a cat. The cat appears out of a wave of energy and light, growing in size and slowly protruding more and more into the theater space, out of the screen. The machine grows out of control and the cat morphs into a digitally animated lion that reaches a claw out at the audience, trying to swipe at their faces. Everyone gasps and laughs, as they know they are not in any real danger, the cat is fake, created by technologies belonging to the apparatus.

The use of 3D technology in this show is fairly typical, even for the majority of 3D productions today. Any use of three-dimensionality in this production is that of emergence, a filmed object seeming to protrude from the screen into the theater space. The viewers' attention is so constantly and directly called to the 3D technology that is all they can pay attention to.

Furthermore, the way this production was presented affected

the way in which the audience would have experienced the technology. Reminiscent of the early film screenings which took place at carnivals and circuses where it was merely shocking technology put on display, this film was shown at Disneyland, an amusement park. This rendered the show as more of a 3D spectacle than a production where a seamless application of the technology could enhance the film, not calling attention to itself. The exhibition³ was also screened in "Tomorrowland" which lent its theme inciting a view directed to the advanced, futuristic technology rather than to the film itself.

A diegetic object emerging into the theater space, leaving the screen to approach the audience, stimulates acknowledgment of the apparatus and brings films like *Honey I Shrank the Audience* into the realm of 'exploitation fare'. The technology is exploited in that it is the sole function of the production; the content of the film falls to the wayside as the three-dimensionality is all the audience can concentrate on. The audience's disavowal of the apparatus is disrupted when they focus on a part of that entity. If there is no function in this happening tied to the film's aim⁴—if there is no thematic or narrative relevance to that filmic object emerging—the viewers will simply be distracted by the emergence instead of focusing on the events within the film being presented.

In 1953 George Sidney's attempt to produce *Kiss Me Kate* in 3D was unsuccessful via ill-use of the emergence effect. Can-can kicks flying straight up and out at the viewers' heads inevitably renders the acknowledgement of the apparatus. Although unsuccessful

³ which is what I choose to call this production as it was solely created to showcase three-dimensional technology.

⁴ One example where disavowal of the apparatus would hinder a film's performance is if the film were following Brecht's philosophy with the want for the audience to constantly be considering the fact that the production is in fact a production.

in terms of facilitating disavowal via their use of the emergence effect, the filmmakers began thinking about 3D technology in ways that it had not been treated before. They were not simply using the technology to put it on display, they were incorporating it into the film to provide thematic significance.

Kiss Me Kate is known to be a film that, even in 2D, plays with the conventions of the relationship between the audience and production and so its use of 3D and the emergence effect could be argued in its favor. This use of the emergence effect enhances some of the themes driving the visual motifs present in the two-dimensional version of the film. The viewers at times becomes a part of the diegetic world in that:

...once the play within the play begins, the audience, in a position that would normally be on the other side of the fourth wall, now effectively becomes part of the dramatis personae...It is perhaps this playfulness of form, a playfulness that specifically revolves around questions of representational reality, that suggested 3-D as an appropriate technology for the film version of *Kiss Me Kate*. (Paul 235)

In the 3D version of the film, not only does the film's audience become the audience of the musical within the film, the film actors enter the audience's space in the movie theater as they play musical performers performing. It engages the viewers' understandings of the way reality can be represented which is a theme in the 2D version in which the audience still becomes the diegetic audience (without the actors in the production entering the theater space). One cannot argue, however, that this use of emergence was continuing the illusion of an apparatus-free event. Actors, obviously parts of the filmic production were invading the viewer's spatial sphere. However, the

intentions behind *Kiss Me Kate* in 3D progressed the possibilities for 3D films in the future. The filmmakers started thinking of ways to use three-dimensionality as a component that progressed the themes in the film itself; showcasing the three-dimensionality was not the sole reason to use the technologies. However, it did not succeed in this case because of their overt use of emergence.

If the technology is not covering a lack of reality, but instead it is the spectacle itself calling attention to the fact that it is a product of the apparatus, the audience cannot disavow that apparatus and become enveloped by the diegetic world. As it is evident, moving film evolved beyond the realm of spectacle and is seen as a medium by which to produce art—3D technologies have this same potential film had at its beginning. The introduction of the representation of three-dimensional space in film is similar to the introduction of visual perspective in two-dimensional film at the beginning of the 20th century. Noel Burch in *Life to Those Shadows* details the historical introduction of Renaissance perspective into film that served the purpose to create a more 'haptic' or seemingly enterable space on screen. Parallel to the filmmakers striving to create a more 'haptic space'⁵, which would facilitate the disavowal of the apparatus, were filmmakers appropriating these technological advancements to function creatively instead of only mimetically for their films. They embraced technologies, at first only thought to be used for creating a more real on-screen space, to create fantastical effects, illusions, and tricks of the eye.

Méliès is one of these special cases in Burch's theory. He used technological advancements and movements promoting three di-

⁵ "...that it can all be entered and touched, is 'haptic', to use the technical term psychologists of perception have derived from the Greek word for touch and juncture"(Burch, 172-3)

mensional space, like the tracking shot, to trick the spectator in seeing an illusion, instead of using it for axial or perpendicular movement on-screen. Burch details Méliès' *Man with a Rubberhead*, a clear example of Méliès' acceptance of the film technologies that could promote a Renaissance perspective and his contemporaneous rejection of a Renaissance representation of space. In this film Méliès tricks the audience into seeing a magician making a man's head shrink and grow on a stage. He uses the tracking shot, usually used to create the sensation of entering the filmic space, to physically zoom in on a head. He then transposes that film onto a stage set where the head, instead of seeming to come closer to the viewers, appears to stay in place and grow larger and smaller according to the magician (played by him) on stage beside it. He appropriated film techniques, usually used to create a more haptic space, to create two dimensional illusions without the suggestion of a three-dimensional space as the other filmmakers were doing at that time.

Méliès uses the technology to work for him, not to manipulate the audience into believing the space on screen is three-dimensional, which they all know is not, even if they are disavowing the apparatus they still know it exists as noted by Metz. Scorsese, in *Hugo*, unlike Méliès, uses 3D filming technology to create the illusion of a three-dimensional space promoting the viewer's disavowal of the apparatus. Like Méliès, though, he uses a technology usually utilized to simply promote a haptic space to function *for* his film—to enhance the content of the film instead of simply promoting a realistic on-screen space.

Méliès is the character and axis upon which *Hugo's* reflection of film technology and its possibilities turns. In the story, Méliès describes how he lost faith in film after World War I when he was

forced to sell his films as chemicals for money. A young boy Hugo, the protagonist of the film, through common spirit, reaches Méliès and brings him back to life and back to the world of film where he is once again embraced for his mastery and trickery in the art of film. Two scenes in particular highlight Scorsese's self-reflexive use of 3D. Scorsese not only applies 3D technology so it is not overtly distracting the viewer from the diegesis of the film, but also employs scenes to reflect, by means of the 3D technology, on the nascent of perspective in film-making that became possible by technological advancement. He uses the technology to help his film speak.

A distinctive scene in *Hugo*, this time not particularly concerning Méliès or his character in the film, points to Scorsese's use of 3D as functioning for the film not only mimetically, but thematically as well. This scene takes place in *Hugo's* dream in which he jumps onto the train tracks at the railway station Gare Montparnasse to retrieve a key that had fallen. With a rumble of the tracks it is apparent that a train is coming. Unlike *Train Arriving at a Station*, the camera's perspective changes constantly and quickly as the train approaches Hugo. One extreme close-up shot films the train head-on where it is coming directly at the viewers. In three quick edits the shot is progressively brought further and further towards the nose of the train where it creates the effect of almost completely enveloping the viewers. Then, a shot places the train approaching the audience at the same axial angle as in *Train Arriving at a Station*. An obvious parody of Lumiere Brothers' seminal film, the scene does not stop there. Like the famed first audience *might* have thought, the train runs straight through its tracks and straight towards the audience. Before one sees if Hugo has been crushed the perspective again changes as one watches the train crash through the terminal either with the

same perspective as the Lumiere film or taking the perspective of the front of the train. Then to an exterior shot showing the face of the station from a distance, again at the same axial angle, to witness the train crashing out of the stations' front windows.

One should easily appreciate the thematic and self-reflexive use of presenting this hyperbolization of *Train Arriving at a Station* in three dimensions. 3D technology is performing thematically, not just mimetically in a scene like this in which in an allusion to that first screening, a train, supposedly once perceived as real in two dimensions gets resurrected into the third. Scorsese places the contemporary audience in the seat of that mythic first audience's and brings it to present day by exhibiting it in 3D. Scorsese places the spectator in between Gunning and Metz's debate. They can either experience momentary belief that the train is coming at them or being thrilled by the use (not necessarily the spectacle as in the *Train Arriving at a Station's* case⁶) of the technology.

Another significant scene in *Hugo* displays Méliès using of three dimensional space with the aim of creating two-dimensional tricks of the eye as described by Burch. In this flashback scene Méliès is filming his famous *Kingdom of Fairies*, specifically, his scene displaying mermaids and lobstermen underwater at King Neptune's court. To create the illusion of an underwater realm Méliès placed an aquarium, with sea creatures placed inside, between the set and the camera. He filmed through the tank, taking advantage of three-dimensional space, to create a two-dimensional trick of the eye. Scorsese takes this one step further by representing the scene itself in three dimensions for his audience.

⁶ for that first audience was not accustomed to the filmic technology as contemporary audiences have adapted to easily comprehending and understanding three-dimensional visuals.

The shot begins by taking on the perspective of Méliès' camera as he shoots the scene through the aquarium. It appears that everything in the frame is underwater. Behind the fish tank one sees actors in mermaid and lobstermen costumes on a set that appears to be inhabiting the same space as real lobsters and fish which lazily float across the screen. The camera then swings diagonally and up to expose the tank holding the water and men dropping lobsters into it to create the effect of creatures swimming by. Méliès' apparatus is exposed and his tricks revealed.

All of this is presented with the 3D technology (the most haptic space represented in film today). Scorsese uses this technology to deploy a perspective that would not have been made as clear if only using 2D film alone. Yes, the audience is more immersed in the diegetic world by virtue of the 3D technology, but again, Scorsese uses the technology to function for the film's content. In three dimensions the audience is able to see Méliès' manipulation of three dimensions to create a two dimensional illusion. This use of 3D filming allows the audience to envision Méliès and his tricks in a way that would not be possible in a 2D production. Scorsese, by virtue of his employment of 3D filming, sheds invaluable light on Méliès's use of three-dimensional space to make more real his two-dimensional, magical illusions. A feat that would not have been as effective is only screening in 2D. Viewers are shown the magician's tricks and they see the instruments used to mystify an audience (i.e. the apparatus in total) all while being presented with the most haptic space imaginable in the cinema today.

Méliès was known for combining the technology of the day with narrative artistry which one can see in Scorsese and his use of 3D technology in *Hugo*. Scorsese represents these events using

contemporary technology employed for, not only the purpose of mimesis, but progression of the film's theme and reflection on the history of the cinema.

Technological advancements in film have a bilateral effect in which they create the possibility of either immersing viewers into the world presented in the theater or alienating them by virtue of their acknowledgement of the apparatus. 3D filming is usually used where the technology itself is put on a pedestal in which it is difficult to focus on anything else within the film as with *Honey I Shrunk the Audience*. The viewers are brought out of the diegetic world back into their seats in the theater where they consider the technology instead of participating with voyeuristic pleasure in an immersion into the film, taking the perspective of the camera.

Though usually applied in this way, 3D technology does have the capability of being used in a nuanced fashion where it does not distract the viewers from the cinematic production. It can be used to function mimetically and enhance the content of the film as seen with Herzog's *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* and it can go even further by functioning artistically, thematically, and narratively within the film as seen with Scorsese's *Hugo*.

Technology has a role in changing the way people view art— with this change comes the capability of 3D's assimilation into the realm where it can be used to advance a film—not simply exist as a technology which one creates a production solely to put that technology on display. 3D technology can be and is used to progress the feeling and message wanted to be delivered to the viewers by the filmmakers—not calling attention to itself and thereby not distracting the viewers from their immersion into the diegetic world.

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Mentor: **Sharon Kaplan**

VEILED INTENTS:

MARRIAGE AS A MEANS OF SOCIAL CONTROL IN THOMAS HARDY'S *JUDE THE OBSCURE*

To many contemporary readers the world faced by Jude in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* seems antiquated and inapplicable to our modern lives, but as readers we must realize that the our modern traditions and laws are based on the very same ordinances that Jude and his family struggled against. As we follow Jude and Sues' move from the institution of marriage with incompatible partners into a loving common law relationship

with each other, we are clearly shown the difference between that which is right and that which is socially acceptable; with the deaths of their children we are shown the great power of their society over them. Both of their first marriages are based on lies and necessity; Jude marries when presented with a fictional pregnancy, and Sue, a single woman with no living family or stable income, must marry another man to survive, in spite her deep love for Jude. It is their eventual fate, in their remarriage to their original spouses that is most telling: Sue chooses to remarry her husband in penance and Jude is remarried to duplicitous Arabella too drunk to stand on his own, beginning the decline that leads to his death immediately after the ceremony.

However, Hardy's novel is not only about the destruction of two people who refuse to follow the rules of their peers, it is an examination of the forces that shaped and created that society. Sue and Jude not only represent the futility of pure love in such a world, they are representative of the working class as a whole at the time of the Industrial Revolution; representative of rapidly shrinking yet accepting class of people, they are forced to leave their rural homes and wander through a judgmental and mechanized society that has provided no place for them. Sue and Jude, both moral, honest, and God-loving people, are not simply the victims of tragic love, they are used by Hardy to show the extinction of their open minded and simple way of life. However, it is the means of their destruction that is most important: marriage is shown by Hardy to be both the tool through which Jude and Sue are destroyed, and it is through that same institution that their peers are herded into the modern age.

SOMETHING OLD

Both the people and places in *Jude the Obscure* highlight the

struggle between a pre- and post- Industrial school of thought. In later passages of the novel, Mrs. Edlin, Phillotson's housekeeper, is used to represent the pre-industrial thought process. She alone disapproves of Sue's remarriage to Phillotson, seeing the union of two people who are not in love as immoral. Mrs. Edlin also fills the role of surrogate mother for orphaned Sue, and her words are not only an expression of her opinion but of her wish to do what is best for Sue. It is through Mrs. Edlin that Hardy is able to express Jude and Sue's objections to marriage most clearly, "Pshoo! You be t'other man's. If you didn't like to commit yourselves to the binding vow again, just at first, 'twas all the more credit to your consciences, considering your reasons, and you med ha' lived on, and made it all right at last. After all, it concerned nobody but your two selves." (Hardy 360) To Jude, Sue, and Mrs. Edlin, marriage is a private matter, not a matter of state. Only Mrs. Edlin recognizes their love as legitimate, and outside of Sue and Jude themselves, it is only Mrs. Edlin that values this morality above the state's mandates.

As an older character, Mrs. Edlin is also more deeply entrenched in the past. While Jude and Sue were raised in older and more accepting times, Mrs. Edlin lived through the same years as an adult. The issues that Sue struggles to find words for are easily put by her housekeeper, "Matrimony have growed to be that serious in these days that one really do feel afeard to move in it at all. In my time we took it more careless; and I don't know that we was any the worse for it!" (Hardy 362) Mrs. Edlin is a clear example of what is most often misunderstood: as the world became more modern and mechanized, it also became less accepting of deviance. Hardy also uses Marygreen, Jude's birthplace, to represent this old way of thinking.

Hardy's fictional Wessex, which throughout his career came to represent a microcosmic England, was first introduced in *Far from the Madding Crowd* and based on his rural childhood home of Dorset. Like Hardy, Jude struggles to work himself out of poverty but finds his class bars him from further formal education. Jude is born into Wessex at a singular time in history. Though the Industrial Revolution is seen as a period of time about one hundred years long (1750-1850), this was no gradual change for the citizens of the time. In this one century the world per capita income was increased by ten times and its population was multiplied by six (Maddison 256). Jude is the product of his time. By the time Jude has become a man, his village, Marygreen, has no opportunities left for him. In addition to having no access to higher education in Marygreen, with the advent of the Industrial Revolution, industry of most kinds has moved into mass production centralized in England's urban centers.

The village itself shows the upheaval of the times and the importance of the church in that transformation. Hardy's initial description of the hamlet shows that even the sleepest rural corners of England were affected by this sweeping change.

It was as old-fashioned as it was small, and it rested in the lap of an undulating upland adjoining the North Wessex downs. Old as it was, however, the well-shaft was probably the only relic of history that remained absolutely unchanged. Many of the thatched and dormered dwelling-houses had been pulled down of late years, and many trees felled on the green. Above all, the original church, hump-backed, wood-turreted, and quaintly hipped, had been taken down, and either cracked up into heaps of road-metal in the lane, or utilized as pig-sty walls, garden seats, guard-stones to fences,

and rockeries in the flower-beds of the neighborhood. In the place of it a tall new building of modern Gothic design, unfamiliar to English eyes, had been erected on a new piece of ground by a certain obliterator of historic records who had run down from London and back in a day...(the) level grass-plot that had immemorially been the churchyard, the obliterated graves being commemorated by eighteen-penny cast-iron crosses warranted to last five years. (Hardy 16)

In this passage Hardy shows a deliberate destruction of history. The only monuments to the past in his description of Marygreen are cheap grave markers and the village well. The markers themselves are not built to endure history, but disintegrate at a rate comparable with the persons they commemorate. The only solidly built piece of history, the well, is no tribute to the past. It is not kept for sentiment, but because it is a functioning machine. In the rapidly changing village of Marygreen, it is not the history of the well that commends it, but its usefulness as a tool.

Hardy's description of the new church is less than flattering. The old church described as both "quaintly hipped" and "hump backed" is personified and its personality is unique and somewhat unconventional. The new church, however, is built in a day by a man down from London. Its description is incredibly short, only "a tall new building of modern Gothic design." Though readers are told nothing more, the very idea of a Gothic cathedral puts a dark, menacing, and cold building in the place of the homey old wooden church. Again, the old church is preserved, but it is not honored or memorialized, it is stripped of its parts and put to use in the gardens, homes and farms of the villagers. Its very erection, done by a man down from London for a day, shows it not as a religious build-

ing, but as a functional and bureaucratic building.

This church is not only more useful than its predecessor, it is also more homogenized. The old church of Marygreen may be lopsided, but it is built of wood and natural stone; its strange shape is at once a testament to its being a natural part of pastoral Marygreen and its idyllic country surroundings and to its community's willingness to accept things slightly off-center. Its replacement stands for different things entirely. Its tall shape not only overshadows all other buildings in the village its architecture is distinctly dark and foreign. The original church was a part of the Marygreen community; the new church was assembled quickly by a representative from the city. The new church is not only imposed on the villagers by a bureaucracy that has never seen them, it embodies the characteristics of that bureaucracy from its uniform parts and efficient erection to its place in the very center of the village.

The greatest change shown in this passage is in what is lost entirely. The church is torn down and rebuilt in modern form, but the thatched roofed houses are simply pulled down. The only trees we are told about are trees that used to shade the green. The loss of the cottages and trees is one of the greatest symptoms of industrialization in Marygreen, and by coupling them Hardy shows them as connected. These changes are shown clearly and simply as in the following passage, "Many of the thatched and dormered dwelling-houses had been pulled down of late years, and many trees felled on the green." (Hardy 16) It is only in recent years that the trees on the green have been given more value as timber than as shade by the people of the village. The only new building in Marygreen appears to be the church, a stone edifice, while demand for lumber has increased. Not only in Hardy's Marygreen but all over rural England

similar changes were taking place. The thatched roofed houses torn down were not only a symbol of loosing a pre-industrialized way of life, they were the remnants of an entire class of people forced to find new work and new lives in urban areas. Marygreen represents both an older way of life and its rapid decline, the evidence of this thought process is also present in Hardy's secondary characters.

SOMETHING NEW

The Industrial Revolution had a great impact on the daily lives of the working class. It was more than learning to work with machines. Until this time, most lower class families made their living in agriculture or labor. With the introduction of machinery, there was simply no work for so many hands. Laborers who were no longer needed on farms most often moved to urban centers to take work in factories and shops. Those who chose to remain in agricultural work found it more difficult to find year round work and often had to move from farm to farm with the harvests. Though wages increased generally, so did the cost of living; while many workers made more, they were not able to live at a higher standard. For many people, this meant starting their own families later. With the exception of highly skilled laborers, many tradesmen, formerly considered invaluable, were left to find work as common laborers, and even those skilled tradesmen could no longer make a living in countryside, but often had to travel to support themselves in their trade.

Lois Bethe Schoenfeld, in *Dysfunctional Families in the Wessex Novels of Thomas Hardy*, writes:

The connection between personal history, socio-historic facts, and fiction is inseparable. The absence of stable families in fictional Wessex, with the individual uprooted from his secure home, cultural traditions, or governmental eco-

nomie policies reflects the real rural artisan class's uprooting from its stable communities. (33)

Jude and Sue are forced to wander through Wessex with their children not only by the disapproval of their neighbors at their unmarried state, but also because as a stone mason Jude cannot find enough work in one place to maintain them. The populations' move from rural life to urban life changed far more for the everyday English person than just a new home and work. To maintain this new society a cultural and moral shift was also affected, in part as a natural reaction of such upheaval, but also through the legislation of morality and the bureaucratization of the church and the institution of marriage.

SOMETHING BORROWED

With the introduction civil marriage came the new societal expectation that all couples should be legally married. In pre-industrialized England, the bulk of the poor and working class lived in rural areas. Those moving to more urban areas quickly found that the attitudes and even the laws of these larger cities were those of the middle class. It was not until moving into these bustling cities that citizens adopted these more bourgeois attitudes. While it was more common for the poor in urban areas to be married in the church, among the rural residents simple and informal ceremonies were sufficient to consider a couple married in the eyes of God and an equally simple ceremony or statement could render them divorced. These ceremonies until the Industrial Revolution were neither immoral nor uncommon and his attempts to convince Sue to marry him reflect this view,

'One thing is certain, that however the decree may be brought about, a marriage is dissolved when it is dissolved.

There is this advantage in being poor obscure people like us—that these things are done for us in a rough and ready fashion. It was the same for me and Arabella. I was afraid her second criminal marriage would have been discovered and she punished; but nobody took and interest in her—nobody inquire, nobody suspected it. If we'd been patented nobilities we should have been in infinite trouble, and days and weeks would have been spent in investigation.' (Hardy 255)

It is this loss of obscurity that does Jude and Sue the most harm. They can neither obfuscate their relationship or its lack of legitimacy in the eyes of their new society. In a newly modernized and legislated England, they are forced by society to accept more stringent codes of conduct, while at the same time, they have lost their rights to a private life and morality of their own.

Unfortunately, not all of these middle class ideals bestowed the same protection on the poor. A middle class woman might be protected from abandonment by her husband, but a poor woman could often be bound forever to a man who would or could not support her. Jude, tied to Arabella through his marriage, is legally and morally responsible for Arabella's child "Father Time," yet, while "Father Time" is unquestionably Jude's legal son there is little evidence that he is Jude's biological son. (Morgan 135) Although Arabella claims in her letter to Jude that "Father Time" is his legitimate son, born only 8 months after her flight, she does not appeal to him on the basis of the child being genetically his, but on the grounds that "Father Time" is his legal heir, when she writes, "He is lawfully yours, that I solemnly swear." (270) Regardless of the child's parentage, he is in fact "lawfully" Jude's. Because Arabella and Jude are legally married, any child she bears before her divorce, is legally his. "Father Time's"

age is unknown; it only by trusting Arabella's word that we can accept him as Jude's son. As is show time and again by Hardy though the novel, Arabella's word is not to be trusted. The fact that she appeals to Jude's sense of legal rather than ethical right in this letter can be seen as evidence that his parentage is in doubt.

While we cannot know for certain whether "Father Time" is Jude's biological son, we can surmise from Arabella's actions throughout *Jude* that the truth of "Father Time's" conception is less important to Arabella than her own personal interests. Sue and Jude agree to raise him as their son, fully acknowledging that he may not Jude's biological child. Although Sue claims to see likenesses between Jude and "Father Time" (274), it is possible that the similarities she notes are not caused by shared blood, but by the shared influence of Arabella. It is "Father Time" in the end who kills Sue and Jude's children, hanging himself beside them, when their family can find no place to live. Hardy shows the destructive power of Jude's marriage to Arabella, by using "Father Time," the legal fruit of that union, as the tool that destroys Jude's family and drives Sue back into her destructive marriage.

While civil marriages differed from church marriages in superficial ways, each were equally binding under the law. Civil marriages were much more expensive, but also could be arranged more quickly and quietly. For the most part, civil ceremonies were used by the middle class, or for marriages that might not be approved of by the church. To be married in a church couples had to have banns, or have their intentions declaimed from the altar or printed in a local paper for a period of weeks before the ceremony could be performed. This gave other members of the community an opportunity to stop marriages that might be considered improper or

immoral. Despite these differences, both forms of marriage were equally legally binding and difficult to dissolve. For Sue and Jude, both already released from failed marriages, neither of these options is acceptable, as they fall contrary to their personal moral codes.

SOMETHING BLUE

While marriage was an economic and social necessity for most women of the time, the state of being married not only made them morally and socially subject to the whims of their husbands, but legally as well. In most cases there was no recourse for an incompatible pairing. Modern readers may find this hard to accept, but for Sue it is a sad reality, she says,

it is said that what a woman shrinks from—in the early days of her marriage—she shakes down to with comfortable indifference in half a dozen years. But that is much like saying that the amputation of a limb is no affliction, since a person gets comfortably accustomed to the use of a wooden leg...

(Hardy 211)

For the majority of women divorce would have been out of the question; even if one could accept it morally, the process was expensive and difficult. Industrial Britain had no place for divorced women, especially in the working class. Women were not only trapped in marriage by society but also by laws that purported to protect them. Although the regulation of marriage was designed to prevent the abandonment of women and children, it also legalized the religious concept of wives and children as the property of the male. As Schoenfeld explains, choosing to live as a single woman was not a realistic option,

The availability of work for unmarried women of both the middle and working class was limited, and age often played an

important factor. Those women who were not married were considered old maids or redundant, and were objects of ridicule. It has also been stated that the ideology of romantic love, while masking the economic basis of bourgeois marriage in this period as an exchange of women, shows by its persistence that it exists autonomously, independent of its specific economic functions in a given historical conjecture. For all women, marriage was seen by society as an economic necessity. (Schoenfeld 79)

Both Jude and Sue are eventually granted divorces from their former partners, but in both cases, it is the male that must legally “release” their wives from their promise. Sue cannot legally file against Phillotson for divorce because he has not abandoned or abused her. Although she is so disgusted by the thought of touching him that she sleeps in a broom closet, Sue has no legal recourse. She, bound by her Christian upbringing, begs his permission before leaving with Jude, and it is at this point that Phillotson is able to file a legal divorce against her. This permission is not only a nod to Christianity; Phillotson has the legal right to ask police assistance in returning his wayward wife. Without this approval, Sue would not only be branded a wanton woman, but could also become a fugitive. Jude’s first wife Arabella must also petition Jude for release from her marriage and travels from Australia to do so, fearing that her new husband will learn of her first marriage. While each woman does receive their divorce, it is not because they have a legal right to divorce their husbands, but because those husbands chose to grant them their liberty. For Jude and Phillotson, the choice to divorce is based on a desire to do right.

LIFTING THE VEIL

While it is easy to see the detrimental affects of marriage on

the working class in *Jude the Obscure* it is more difficult to unravel its benefits because the benefits of marriage do not go to the newly married couple, but to the state. Its stated purpose is to fill the emotional and deeply human need to love: it is both a religious ceremony that legitimizes the relationship between a man and woman and a way to create a stable legal bond that protects the dependent wife and children from abandonment. Marriage also serves the further legal purpose of ensuring the inheritance of name and property. In Jude's time marriage also was a way to maintain ownership of women as shown by Schoenfeld:

although marriage was a social and economic necessity for women, it was in reality just another form of slavery and servitude. Once a woman was married, she not only became subordinate to her husband socially and morally, but legally as well. (79)

Marriage had further benefits to the state as well. In their move to urban centers, there was also a shift in the morality of the middle and upper classes. As the working class adopted these values, mandatory legal marriage among them, the state cast an illusion. Although many of these marriages would prove to be detrimental and insoluble, they also created a false sense of equality that implied a class mobility that was rarely achieved. This false equality also worked as a means to sooth a population that had undergone a rapid change in their way and quality of life. Moving to urban areas meant dealing with greater congestion and smaller living spaces, high amounts of coal pollution, loss of cottage industries (Schoenfeld 149), and longer working hours, and more repetitive labor. Adopting middle class values allowed the impression that they were also adopting a higher standard of living and that social mobility

could be more easily achieved. (Kucich 41-43) Unfortunately, this was rarely the case. These marriages also stabilized the working class in a time of great upheaval.

With higher wages and available jobs, marriage banns quite simply made it harder for the working class to remain mobile. In order to marry they had to first establish residency of a certain period (typically two weeks to a month depending on locality), and then declare their banns for a period of weeks. Further, because church weddings were the only affordable option for most, involvement in their community was dependent on their involvement with church. As this involvement increased so did England's ability to accurately count and maintain records of their citizens. Census at this time was taken not by counting individuals or residences, but through parish records. (Kucich 133-135) Closer community ties to the church also led to further moral legislation and a general lessening of the attitude of acceptance among the British people. In order to marry, citizens had to be established members of their parish; in order to be accepted by their society, citizens had to be married or abstain from relations with the opposite sex. For most women, abstention was not generally an option; the acceptance of their peers hinged upon their status as married or marriageable. Jude is more than a symbol of a man destroyed by his society, he is the symbol of a generation punished and cast aside by the increased mechanization of society and the states attempt to legislate love for its own purpose.

In fact, there are no happily married couples to be seen in *Jude the Obscure*. Jude and Sue have the only successful relationship, but it is shown to be a relationship that destroys them. Jude is married to Arabella twice but only through her deliberate deception—the first marriage is arranged through false pregnancy and the second is

a result of Arabella's deliberately getting Jude drunk. Sue is married to a man she cannot stand to touch, but who is too good for her to legally divorce. The married couples they do encounter during their failed trip to marry only enforce this.

While attempting to get a civil marriage, Jude and Sue watch a couple composed of a drunken soldier and his battered bride sign the necessary documents in a dingy and bureaucratic office. Sue filled with repugnance is frightened by both the atmosphere and company saying, "Jude—I don't like it here! I wish we hadn't come! The place gives me the horrors: it seems so unnatural as the climax of our love! I wish it had been at a church, if it had to be at all. It is not so vulgar there!" (Hardy 281) Although Sue sees marriage more as a necessity than genuine desire, she does recognize the love between herself and Jude as holy.

Even in a church, Jude and Sue cannot bring themselves marry. After their failed marriages, their second attempt seems to run against their moral code, and to Sue the thought is sacrilegious. Though they encounter a more hopeful pair in the church, an innocent young bride and her husband to be, Sue and Jude still cannot bring themselves to be married. It is here that Sue again who gives voice to the couple's discomfort,

'It is not the same to her, poor thing, as it would be to me doing it over and over again with my present knowledge... You see they are fresh to it, and take the proceedings as a matter of course. But having been awakened to its awful solemnity as we have, or at least as I have, by experience, and my own too squeamish feelings perhaps sometimes, it really does seem immoral in me to go and undertake the same thing again with open eyes. Coming in here and seeing this has

frightened me from a church wedding as much as the other did from a registry one.' (Hardy 281-82)

To Sue, the young bride is innocent and ignorant of the true nature of a marriage. She calls them both "fresh" and when she says they take marriage as "a matter of course," she acknowledges that for them marriage is the only option. Jude and Sue have both been unsuccessful legal partners and successful in their elicit relationship with each other. Because they have chosen to live outside marriage and because they have left their marriages behind, breaking custom and social code, they do have more options and more understanding of the institution. To marry, knowing what they do, would be greater sin than living unmarried as they do already.

Schoenfeld says:

First, they refuse to have their union legalized. They feel that their common-law marriage is sufficient and feel no need to have it sanctified by either the church or State. Even when they pretend to have had it sanctified, society is not willing to accept it because the couple still treat each other with love and respect. Their behavior was considered contrary to how married couples were supposed to act. (44)

Jude and Sue, through their failed marriages and their failure to love each other inside the bond of marriage, do more than just hint at the destructive power of marriage. Hardy uses a variety of symbols through the novel to show this, but he also uses Sue to state the matter plainly, saying,

'it is foreign to man's nature to go loving a person when he is told that he must and shall be that person's lover. There would be a much likelier chance of his doing it if he were told not to love. If the marriage ceremony consisted

of an oath and signed contract between the parties to cease loving from that day forward, in consideration of personal possession being given, and to avoid each other's society as much as possible in public, there would be more loving couples than there are now." (Hardy 256)

It is this sense of morality and right is that is Hardy's loudest denouncement of marriage. By comparing the morality of the characters to their views on marriage or their success in the institution, it is clear to see that marriage is not what it is purported to be and that its dangers far outweigh its advantages. Both are employed in close connection with the church, Sue as a church illustrator and Jude spends his entire youth in study so that he can attend the ecclesiastical college in Christminster. Despite their goodness they are rejected by a society that does not recognize love as part of a true marriage. "Sue, who had previously been called Mrs. Bridehead, now openly adopted the name of Mrs. Fawley. Her dull, cowed, and listless manner for days seemed to substantiate all this." (Hardy 294), it is not Sue and Jude's love that keeps those around them from recognizing their marriage as legitimate, and only misery that gives their relationship authenticity. The fact that being "dull," "cowed," and "listless" mark Sue as married can be troubling; these are the same sorts of symptoms that are exhibited by victims of abuse or that may indicate depression. It is made clear in this passage that marriage precludes happiness.

'TIL DEATH DO US PART

The fate of Hardy's characters, both good and bad show clearly the destructive force of marriage. Like all women, Arabella must marry, but due to her character and class she can only marry well through deception. When examining her character, we must re-

member that she is Hardy's best example of marriage at its worst. In many ways, Arabella is the foil of the state—while she claims to marry Jude for love and necessity, both her condition and her presented intentions conceal a much darker purpose.

She does not seduce Jude as much as ensnare him with concocted and false pregnancy. Arabella's disguise as a good woman is erased the moment she and Jude enter their new home. As Arabella hangs her beautiful hair on the mirror, her false nature is revealed and in defending her use of false hair to Jude, she allows her past as a barmaid to come to light for the first time. Arabella's clean language comes off as quickly as her hair. Hardy shows Arabella's low class and deception through her dialect—a dialect she uses in the story to converse with her tricky cohorts but is replaced with more formal English when Jude courts her. It is not until their wedding night that Arabella lapses back into dialect in Jude's presence. This dialect and Arabella's schemes to marry up further show her as a social climber. John Kucich in Hardy's *Sense of Sex* writes,

One such linkage of ethical oppositions is Hardy's sense that desire is inextricable from social, as well as moral transgression. That is to say, a second lingering Victorianism in Hardy's work is his tacitly expressed conviction that social aspiration always has affinities with dishonesty and by implication, with sexual desire... (229)

Arabella clearly shows the link between social climber and moral bankruptcy. She leaves Jude with no warning, selling their possessions out from under him. She divorces, not free herself or him, but in order to make her illegal marriage to a wealthy man legal. She also ships their son, "Father Time" to him to avoid telling her new husband about him. In order to ascend the social ladder through

marriage, she marries and divorces Jude, then hides and eventually gives up her son.

In the end it is Arabella's triumph that most clearly condemns the institution. Jude's death comes as an almost natural aftermath of a second marriage to Arabella, "He had done a few days work during the two or three months since the event, but his health had been indifferent, and now it was precarious." (Hardy 379) Her actions at the time of his death show she is as corrupted at the end of Jude as in the beginning. After finding Jude dead during a boating festival, she says nothing and returns to watch the festivities with the arm of a new beau, her husband's doctor, already clasped around her waist. It is not until after the race is won that Arabella goes directly to fetch a woman to prepare Jude for burial, saying he has just passed in her presence to avoid the possibility of an inquest.

Arabella's last words in the novel are not of her husband but refer his lover, Sue. "She's never found peace since she left his arms, and never will again till she's as he is now!" (Hardy 403) Like all of Jude's society, Arabella recognizes the love between them. Even the society that condemns them recognizes their devotion, and it is that devotion that they use to justify their belief that the two are unmarried. In the world of Wessex and the world beyond, Jude and Sue stand as testament to the incompatibility of love and marriage. It is through their struggle that we are shown marriage not as a choice made in love but as a requirement of society that by definition can only cause misery to its participants.

Arabella alone is successful because she is the most devious. She secures Jude through trickery and illusion, knowing that as a good man he can and will provide for her. The deliberate illusion she creates to ensnare Jude is no different than the illusion of mar-

riage perpetuated by the state, like Arabella, for its own means. The bulk of England did not benefit from stricter marriage laws or the widespread social requirement of marriage. For the poor, it was essentially an unbreakable bond—in many cases for worse or for worse.

As for Sue, Jude, and Phillotson, there is no happy ending. Sue and Jude's children are all killed in Father Time's dramatic suicide. Sue returns to her husband in a penance that tortures them both. Phillotson does sacrifice his position in society to give Sue her freedom and his choice to take her back does not restore it. Phillotson may be Hardy's least lovable victim, but his sacrifice for Sue shows his love for her to be as pure and noble as the love shared between Sue and Jude. Phillotson is mocked by society as a cuckold for allowing Sue her freedom, and punished personally by Sue's mad hysteria and disgust with him as a husband. It is only in death that Jude finds the peace of his obscurity at last.

HONEYMOON'S END

Jude the Obscure demonstrates clearly the devastating effects new marriage legislation and its accompanying societal expectations on the lower classes. While this legislation was in many ways designed to promote more stable family relationships, Hardy shows it essentially created detrimental and insoluble bonds in the lower classes. Further, the institution of marriage had several latent advantages for the government, that were not designed to strengthen the bond between man and wife, but as a means to increase the state's involvement in the lives of its newly married citizens. In the most simple of terms, it was only by blatant and purposeful misrepresentation of the purpose of marriage, that England and the church were able to deceive their citizens into accepting it as a widespread social

practice. While added security may have been a lure to the upper and middle classes, marriage in the lower classes was more beneficial to the state as a means of inhibiting both geographical and class mobility than a benefit of any kind to its participants. Jude and Sue are both legally married to other people, but their love cannot thrive within the confines of a legal relationship. Their relationship shows the stark contrast between love and marriage and their eventual destruction is representative of the crime perpetrated against the lower classes as a whole through the government's attempt to legislate morality. Through the illusion of marriage as a socially desirable institution, the state was able to engender a new more homogenized ethical attitude in its people that matched the uniformity and mechanization of industry at the time.

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MAGICAL REALISM AS A SUBVERSIVE AGENCY:

CLARA THE CLAIRVOYANT IN
THE HOUSE OF THE SPIRITS

Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits* presents us with a world in which the realities of post-colonial Chile fuse with the extraordinary. The family lineage is crucial in that it highlights and links together the three successive generations of women who lie at the heart of the novel. These three women—Clara, Blanca, and Alba—come to embody the transmission of familial traits, both magical and mundane, that are also shaped largely by the

shifting political and social ideals of the society in which they live. It is Clara, the matriarch of the Trueba family, who first embodies courage and resilience against the oppressive patriarchal structure of turn-of-the-century Chile, qualities that are later taken up by her granddaughter Alba in her work against the dictatorial government. These qualities emanate partially from the supernatural and yet are used as a means of rebellion against the injustices of a repressive day-to-day existence. Although Clara can see the future, she remains silent for many years. Her long silences are described in terms of the supernatural and are used to subversively challenge the aggressive male-dominated social structure. As such, they become a technique of magical realism. Both Clara's clairvoyance and self-determined silence show that she is an active figure that, though partially restrained by the authoritative patriarchy, is still able to rebel to effect positive change by tricky, less overt means, including through her connection with her granddaughter, Alba.

Magical realism functions in *The House of the Spirits* not so much as a direct juxtaposition between the real and the marvelous but as placing both entities side-by-side to create a kind of liminal space in which both must interact. Zamora and Faris define magical realism as a mode of fiction in which “the supernatural is not a simple or obvious matter, but it is an ordinary matter, an everyday occurrence—admitted, accepted, and integrated into the rationality and materiality of literary realism”(3). By integrating Clara's clairvoyance and other extraordinary traits into the pattern of her day-to-day existence, Allende breaks the boundaries of literary realism to question the perceived passivity of women in mid-twentieth century South America. According to Linda Goulde Levine, author of *Isabel Allende*, “As accepted notions of power and dominance are ques-

tioned, subverted, and transformed, readers are implicitly urged to contemplate and ‘change’ their ‘prejudices’ about what constitutes the nature of reality”(21). This perception of their passivity is rooted in the historical context of the novel. Clara, born the daughter of a wealthy politician in 1920s Chile, is the embodiment of the social role played by upper-class women of the time: she grows up in a fairly sheltered environment, then goes on to marry Esteban Trueba, another wealthy senator. She remains married to Esteban all her life, despite his physical and emotional abuse, rarely leaving the mansion after which *The House of the Spirits* is named.

The patriarchal system plays a crucial role in that it represents one half of the male/female duality present in the novel. While Allende ascribes a trickily subversive power to Clara, her husband Esteban’s aggressive and physical nature stands in contrast to Clara’s mystic persona. Karen Castellucci Cox, author of *Isabel Allende: A Critical Companion*, Clara represents a critique of the South American machismo culture, or a masculine code of behavior that is common in Latin American cultures. According to Cox, “Machismo essentially is a code by which men prove their virility through their sexual prowess, their ability to fend for themselves, and their unquestioned leadership in their families” (21).

In *The House of the Spirits*, Cox argues, both Esteban and his grandson serve as a critique of the machismo society in which they live by suggesting the dangers of such a system. Esteban, for example, repeatedly rapes several peasant women living on his estate, one of whom gives birth to his child. The child, and, much later, Esteban’s illegitimate grandson represent the detrimental consequences of these rapes: Esteban Garcia, the grandson, is portrayed much more violently even than Esteban, not only as a brutal rapist but

also as an agent for the torture of innocents. The nature of the male-dominated line of succession points to the cause-and-effect in its transmission. It is worth noting that Esteban Garcia’s violent characteristics are portrayed as the eventual result of his long-standing bitterness and hatred toward Esteban for the rape of his grandmother and his own illegitimacy. This male-dominated line of succession works as a parallel force to the female succession of Clara, Blanca, and Alba. These three names each connote purity in their original meaning; in the original Spanish, they mean “clear,” “white,” and “dawn,” respectively. As such, Allende’s choice of names creates a separate genealogy that indicates the divide between an overtly male and often violent power and the more subtle and tricky power that the women of the novel, especially Clara, represent. Clara’s name is notable precisely because its meaning hints not just at her clairvoyance but at the clarity with which she acts in subversively undermining her husband and the patriarchal sphere. This is continued down the line, especially by Alba, who represents the dawn of a new and less oppressive time.

The interpretation of Clara as a passive or active figure rests on the answering of several key questions. In particular, does Clara utilize her clairvoyance to attempt to change the world in which she lives, or does she simply sit back and allow events to unfold? Patricia Hart, author of *Narrative Magic in the Fiction of Isabel Allende*, suggests that it is the latter. According to Hart, Clara’s clairvoyance is the embodiment of passivity so great that she will allow disaster to fall upon herself and her family because she never attempts to change the future, and she certainly does not challenge the male-dominated superstructure. As she argues, “Clara is an essentially passive human being, and her passivity in a metaphorical sense can

is closely related to and excused by her clairvoyance. Throughout the novel Clara uses her clairvoyance as an excuse for nonaction. It can also be seen as a metaphor for passivity itself” (52-53). Hart’s interpretation, however, does not take into account the complexities of Clara’s social role at the time. Although it is true that Clara is unable to protect her loved ones from disaster, it is not for lack of trying. Instead, it is the result of the way in which she is treated by both her father and her husband, neither of whom is willing to take her premonitions into serious consideration. When disaster falls despite Clara’s warnings, it lies not so much on Clara’s shoulders but those of the men who have the ability to take heed of her word and yet fail to do so. As a child, her clairvoyance manifests itself both in major and minor matters, most notably in the death of her sister Rosa.

Rosa, as Clara’s sister, does not play a role in the direct line of female succession. Instead, she is an empyreal figure as much heavenly as earthly. Allende describes her this way: “The girl’s strange beauty had an ethereal quality that the girl could not help noticing, for this child seemed to have been made of a different material than the rest of the human race. Even before she was born, Nivea had known she was not of this world, because she had already seen her in dreams” (4). Clara possesses none of this ethereal beauty and is more anchored in reality embroidered on her tablecloth, creatures that were half bird and half mammal, covered with iridescent feathers and endowed with horns and hooves, and so fat with stubbly wings that they defied the laws of biology and aerodynamics” (5). Rosa represents a branch of the family tree that embodies almost total fragility, one that does not lead to a line of succession. Instead, it leads to her untimely death, as Rosa’s passivity is rooted in the past and not the future.

Rosa’s death marks a crucial turning point within the novel, especially in terms of the lasting effects it has on Clara, including her silences. Rosa dies after being accidentally given a poison meant for her father, Severo, in a tragedy that Clara has already foreseen. The day after announcing the imminent death of a family member, Clara wakes screaming in the middle of the night. However, in the morning “no one paid her much attention” (25), the others of the household being too busy. Hart argues that Clara’s inability to save Rosa stems from her passivity. However, there is precious little that Clara, as a female child, can do if the others of her family fail to take her seriously.

After Rosa’s death, Clara stops speaking for most of her adolescence as an act of rebellion. Although she regains her voice after marrying Esteban, her predictions still fall on deaf ears, despite their unerring accuracy. For example, in the weeks before a devastating earthquake hits Tres Marias, the mansion in which Clara and Esteban live, Clara frequently informs her husband of the upcoming calamity, “daily growing paler and more agitated” as she predicts “a thousand dead”(158). Esteban’s response is very condescending: he laughs at her and tells her not to worry, since there “are always earthquakes” (158). Because he fails to take the proper precautions, not only is the mansion severely damaged, but there is a major loss of life among the peasants. Esteban himself is buried under a wall of tile until he is pulled out hours later.

Hart also argues that Clara’s glimpses into the future are never acted upon and therefore solely function to represent her unwillingness to create change. However, at multiple points within the text, Clara’s clairvoyance gives her a power over others, particularly Esteban. Clara’s marriage to Esteban is the result of her prediction that

the two will one day marry, despite the initial resistance of Clara's family to such an idea. Hart suggests that Clara accepts and even embraces her future with Esteban because she is too afraid to try to change the future. Given this, it is striking how Clara disregards the will of her parents, who seem reluctant to marry her to Esteban, providing him a long list of reasons why Clara, because of her supernatural powers, would not be a good match. Also notable is Clara's directness when she and Esteban first meet. They do not court normally, over a period of time, but have only one conversation before she asks him about the possibility of marriage, after which they become engaged. Esteban's reaction to her sudden proposal is as follows: "He was smiling, unable to believe his own good fortune. He did not know that she had seen her own destiny, that she had summoned him with the power of her own thought and had made up her mind to marry him without love"(90). Clara's marriage to Esteban, then, is not a passive acceptance of her own destiny, as she is the one who has "summoned him with the power of her own thought," having made the conscious decision to marry him.

Hart also fails to take into consideration the possible advantages of marrying Esteban, who as a landowner with political ambitions possesses the social status that Pedro Tercero, a peasant who has his eye on Clara, does not. Viewed in this light, Clara is not a passive figure, but instead processes willpower of her own, trickily using what she foresees for her own gain. When Clara becomes pregnant with twin sons, she both foresees the gender of the babies but also "predicts" their names, Nicolas and Jaime. This prediction takes place in one of the sections narrated from Esteban's point-of-view, trickily undermining his overt authority. According to Esteban: "I got furious, arguing that these were names of foreign

merchants, that at least one of them should be called Esteban, like myself and my father. Her decision was inflexible. To frighten her, I smashed a porcelain jar that, I believe, was the last vestige of the splendid days from my great-grandfather, but Clara was unmoved" (115). Here Clara shuts her husband out of a major decision that otherwise would have been his to make. By not naming one of their children Esteban, as he would have chosen, Clara trickily breaks the line of male succession that would otherwise have been granted. Esteban's breaking his great-grandfather's porcelain jar is parallel to his acknowledgment that the nomenclature of the male-dominated lineage has been ruptured. Instead, Esteban's illegitimate children and grandchildren are the ones who bear his name.

Neither Nicolas nor Jaime share the same traits of their father to the same extent that Esteban's illegitimate descendants do. As they mature, they eventually resemble more their mother in their lack of violence, especially Jaime, who is a compassionate and gentle soul: "All the money his father gave him ended up in the pockets of the improvised children he took care of at the hospital. Whenever some emaciated dog followed him about on the street, he brought it home, and whenever he heard about an abandoned child, unwed mother, or an old woman who needed help, he brought the poor ones home"(220-221). Jaime's gentleness is notable in a novel in which the majority of the men are depicted in such an aggressive manner. Clara's tricky defiance against Esteban shows how she is able to use her foreknowledge as a means of manipulation, breaking the violent, male-dominated line of succession through the means available to her.

Clara's emotional manipulation is very much linked to her silence within the text. Clara undergoes two major spells of silence:

firstly, during her adolescence after Rosa's untimely death; and secondly, in her marriage to Esteban after he physically abuses her. According to Karen Castellucci Cox, author of *Isabel Allende: A Critical Companion*, Clara's clairvoyance, as well as her long spells of silence, serve as a form of psychological withdrawal from a violent, male-dominated world. At the same time, Cox argues that they can also be viewed as a form of resistance and source of power for a woman who otherwise lacks a voice in the patriarchal system. Cox believes that Clara's silence after Rosa's death indicates her inability to cope with reality and is the aftereffect of trauma. According to Cox, Clara retreats to a beautiful, metaphysical world, in which she "walked through the halls and patios wrapped in the scent of flowers, a rustling of starched petticoats, and a halo of curls and ribbons" while conversing with the spirits (82).

Clara's silence is very much linked to her foreknowledge and is not addressed in the text as a psychological illness or mere stubbornness, as both the family doctor and her mother acknowledge that she is healthy. Instead, her silence during her childhood is extraordinary in nature: "It was a world in which time was not marked by calendars or watches and objects had a life of their own, in which apparitions sat at the table and conversed with human beings and the past and future formed a single unit"(82). Clara's retreat into muteness, then, should be addressed in light of the magical realist qualities, especially clairvoyance, given to her by the text.

Clara's silence functions both as a defense mechanism against the aggressive male-dominated world that led to her sister's early death and as a tricky form of resistance. By being silent for so many years, Clara subtly manipulates her family into guilt, having decided that "speaking was useless" (73). Her silence also connects to her

process of gaining mystical knowledge in preparation for her marriage with Esteban, in which she attempts to use her clairvoyance to break the patriarchal structure that so confines her. It is only through preparation and years spent honing her clairvoyance that Clara is ready to take up this challenge.

Most of the challenge that Clara takes on has its roots in the subversive manipulation of the male-dominated sphere, Esteban in particular. Although Clara does not have a voice in this sphere, her silences grant her a voice that leaves a lasting effect on Esteban. After his temper flares out of control and he beats her, Clara stops talking to him for the rest of their marriage. These silences soon become physically manifested within the house itself. As they grow further and further apart, new rooms and corridors begin to magically appear within, as the "noble, seigniorial architecture began sprouting all sorts of little rooms, staircases, turrets, and terraces" until Tres Marias becomes almost labyrinthine (224). Esteban never beats her again and grows to feel a kind of remorse for his actions. This regret is manifested through Esteban's physically shrinking as he ages. After Clara dies, Esteban goes into her room and sits down beside her for a little while. The scene is from his perspective, granting further interiority to his character: "She had lost weight and I wondered if she had grown, but then I realized it was just an optical illusion, the result of my own shrinking"(293). According to Goulde Levine: "Unable to possess her in life, and acutely aware of inhabiting, physically and spiritually, a different space from his wife, Trueba slowly becomes 'clarified' during the course of the novel. Like Clara before him, he hears the laughter of the spirits who inhabit his house, most notably that of his wife, and realizes that 'the irreparable fact of her death did nothing to alter our reunion. We were finally reconciled'"

(Goulde Levine 35, Allende 249). Esteban's remorse softens him and, symbolically,

The act of writing is also notable. Though the majority of the novel is narrated from the third-person, focusing on Clara and her female descendants, the narration does switch to Esteban's and Alba's point of view at times, cementing the juxtaposition between male and female. Notably, later on Alba reveals herself as the implicit "author" of *The House of the Spirits*, using written notes, transcripts, and her grandmother's diaries to piece together the history of her family. According to Goulde Levine, "The presence of Alba and Esteban as the text's narrators provides a refreshing reversal of the 'double-voiced discourse' of women's writings—in which the 'dominant' voice is male and the 'muted' voice is female. The dominant voice is Alba's, and the muted voice, reduced to 45 pages of a 367-page novel, is Esteban's" (22). The act of writing, Goulde Levine argues, "deflates Trueba's discourse of power as Allende pays homage to what has been considered classically feminine, private genres, among them Clara's diaries and letters" (23). Interestingly, most of Esteban's, Nicholas and Jaime's written documents do not survive the war, but Clara's diaries do. Goulde Levine writes that this "reflects the belief of the potency of women's words, words that cannot be silenced by oppressive regimes" (24). Allende underscores this point in a scene where Blanca reads to a young Alba out of a book of fairy tales. Each fairy tale reverses the traditional gender role. For example, "Sleeping Beauty" is rewritten as a young prince who must sleep for a hundred years to find true love. According to Goulde Levine, this is so compelling to a young Alba that "it cannot help but shape Alba's disavowal of patriarchal norms" (24).

Even after Clara passes away, she serves the important role

as the inspiration for her granddaughter Alba. As her name, which means "dawn," suggests, Alba becomes the embodiment of the modern woman who has the freedom to decide for her herself if she will marry and what her political beliefs will be. Alba is still constrained, however, by the patriarchal structure very much in place in 1970s revolutionary Chile. The closeness of the relationship between Clara and Alba is portrayed as leaving a lasting impression on Alba as she grows up: "For Alba, the most important person in the house and strongest presence in her life was her grandmother" (281), finding in her "a sure refuge when she was haunted by nightmares" (282). The connection between Alba and Clara extends onwards after death in the form of telepathic communication. Most significantly, Clara appears as a ghost to Alba when she is in a political camp under the watch of Esteban Garcia, her distant cousin. Clara encourages Alba not to commit suicide, therefore imparting strength to her granddaughter even from beyond the grave: "When she had nearly achieved her goal, her Grandmother Clara, whom she had invoked many times to help her, appeared with the idea that the point was not to die, since death came anyway, but to survive, which would be a miracle" (414). Clara's message is not of passivity, but resistance in the face of oppression and suffering, even if it is by necessity a tricky and subversive resistance. For example, like Clara, Alba chooses silence when asked repeatedly by Esteban Garcia about the location of her lover Miguel, who is wanted by the conservative government. Although Alba does not physically have the strength to ward herself away from Esteban Garcia, by refusing to speak to him she sends a message that again represents subtle strength in the face of violence. Esteban Garcia, by contrast, feels only aggressive hatred toward Alba, whom he sees as taking his rightful place as Esteban's legiti-

mate progeny. This hatred has warped him to such a great extent that he comes to be the ultimate symbol of the dangers of a repressive and patriarchal system.

The novel closes with Alba's first-person perspective after she is finally let out of the camp and returns to her grandfather's home. She is pregnant and vows to love the child, even if it is Esteban Garcia's. Like Clara, she makes no pretense of naming the child after its father, but unlike Clara her child serves to represent a reunification of the two genealogies that will run through its veins, fusing the aggressive male-dominated line that began with Esteban with that of her own mother and grandmother. As such, the book ends on a note of hope. According to Alba: "It would be very difficult for me to avenge all those who have to be avenged, because revenge would be just another part of the same inexorable rite. I have to break that terrible chain" (432). This chain is broken through Alba's love for her child. Alba's pregnancy also coincides with Esteban's death from old age, indicating a future in which the brutality of the patriarchal society that dominated Chile has begun to pass away.

Clara functions in *The House of the Spirits* as a figure both passive and active, confined by her social role but still able to enact positive change, including her influence on her granddaughter Alba. The succession of Clara, Blanca and Alba works in direct juxtaposition to the succession of Esteban's children; while the three women represent an attempt to challenge the male-dominated society in which they live, the men represent the brutality of this system. It is only at the end of the novel that both lines come together to provide a reason to hope for the future of Chile. As such, Clara's mysticism is a function of the magical realism embodied within the work. Although Clara herself is constrained by the social norms of her day

and unable, for example, to single-handedly halt the aggressiveness of the patriarchal structure, her actions represent a tricky and subversive challenge to them that is later built through her granddaughter Alba, whose name means "dawn."

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THE ECO-SUBLIME:

THE DROWNED WORLD AS A HOPEFUL APOCALYPSE

The end of the world has never felt like such a pressing issue as it has in the past decade, where both pop culture as well as interest in real environmental issues are representative of apocalyptic fascination. Many films and documentaries follow this trend, with film titles such as *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), *Wall-E* (2008), and *2012* (2009), as well as documentaries such as National Geographic's *Aftermath: Population Zero* (2008),

and The History Channel's *Life After People* (2008 and 2010). There seems to be an increasing awareness of real issues posing threats to the planet as well, especially climate change, deforestation, pollution, and disappearing resources. Is it just a coincidence that our culture seems to be obsessed with the end of the world at the same time that knowledge of our environmental issues seems to be pointing in the same grim direction? What is the correlation between these two occurrences? Is the interest in the end of the world detrimental or beneficial for solving environmental issues? To work towards these questions at issue I would like to turn to apocalyptic natural disaster literature, specifically J.G. Ballard's book *The Drowned World* (1962), and compare it to an essay by environmental theorist William Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness" (1995). Books such as *The Drowned World* seem to be pessimistic, since in them the earth is already in such a chaotic state that human extinction is imminent. William Cronon argues that an outlook like this is negative and impractical for creating any ecological change, since it implies that man has ruined nature to such an extent that the only way to save it is through our own destruction. These stories may not be as cynical as they seem, though. J.G. Ballard's *The Drowned World* is representative of an interesting attribute of some natural disaster stories: it uses the sublime, not to show how stunning and amazing nature is, but to paint the relationship and closeness of man and nature as something magnificent and awe-inspiring in itself. The sublime is the effect of something so amazing that it is impossible to comprehend with reason, where the observer can no longer relate or understand their relationship with an object and must form a new one. Used in the way it is used in *The Drowned World*, readers are encouraged to re-think the relationship between mankind and nature. This creates

an interesting paradox in which a pessimistic ending of human life actually creates hope for successful environmental change, since when used in this way, the sublime sparks interest in understanding the connection between man and nature that William Cronon believes is so necessary.

William Cronon's essay "The Trouble With Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature" is one of the first efforts to explain the problems that sublimity holds for environmental advocacy. He argues that because believe in the idea that authentic nature being sublime and free of human influence, nature is doomed, since wilderness itself is an idea created by man. He writes, "If we allow ourselves to believe that nature, to be true, must also be wild, then our very presence in nature represents its fall. If this is so... then also by definition it can offer no solution to the environmental and other problems that confront us" (17). Cronon believes that wilderness doesn't actually exist. Wilderness is untouched by man, but in reality there is no such clear division between man and nature. Nature changes man and man changes nature, even in the most distant places. In order to create environmental progress, Cronon suggests a need for viewing nature and humans as interdependent, not separate entities. He writes, "we need an environmental ethic that will tell us as much about using nature as about not using it" (21).

Cronon explains how the idea that wilderness must be pristine and untouched presents humans with only one logical solution to preserve it: our own destruction.

The tautology gives us no way out: if wild nature is the only thing worth saving, and if our mere presence destroys it, then the sole solution to our own unnaturalness, the only way to protect sacred wilderness from profane humanity,

would seem to be suicide. It is not a proposition that seems likely to produce very positive or practical results. (19)

This suicide for the sake of nature seems analogous to our society's fascination in mankind-destroying natural disasters. Since in these disasters, nature outlives humans, they can be seen as attempts to return the earth to its supposedly purer, more perfect state: that of a wilderness without people. As Cronon says, this idea doesn't seem to hold any potential since it requires us to destroy ourselves. My proposal is a more hopeful perspective to the viewing of these disastrous plots. When it comes to natural disasters such as the one in *The Drowned World*, the meeting of man and nature is a sublime occurrence; The juxtaposition of violent, expansive nature and the cities we have created as our homes brings flowing, unexplainable emotions; emotions evoked by the sublime.

Immanuel Kant describes the sublime in this way: "it is an object (of nature) the representation of which determines the mind to think the unattainability of nature as a presentation of [reason's] ideas" (Weiskel 22). The sublime is something that when felt, such as by looking at a waterfall or an expansive canyon, causes the observer to feel that there is no possible way he can comprehend the object, in this case the waterfall or canyon. Sublime objects seem to defy reason, because they are so amazing that it is startling. In his book *Approaching the Romantic Sublime*, Thomas Weiskel splits the sublime moment into three steps.

In the first phase, the mind is in a determinate relation to the object... This is the state of normal perception or comprehension... In the second phase the habitual relation of mind and object suddenly breaks down. Surprise or astonishment is the affective correlative... In the third, or reactive, phase of

the sublime moment, the mind recovers the balance of outer and inner by constituting a fresh relation between itself and the object such that the very indeterminacy which erupted in phase two is taken as symbolizing the mind's relation to a transcendent order. (Weiskel 23)

Before realizing the sublimity of an object, the observer's mind holds a habitual way of seeing and understanding the object and what it means in relation to himself. For example, if the object is a waterfall, a viewer first sees a waterfall and recognizes it as a waterfall. They understand that they themselves are human and what they see is a waterfall. When the sublimity becomes apparent, in the second stage, the observer is faced with surprise and astonishment. Upon realizing how amazing the height of the waterfall is, how fast the water is flowing, he is suddenly unable to understand his own relation with it. As a human he is small and weak in comparison, and he is unable to understand how he is related to this waterfall. The last phase is where the mind of the observer creates a new relation to the object, in which the object is viewed as an object of transcendence, an object whose previously-unexplainability is only a representation of how powerful and heavenly it is. The observer of the waterfall feels as if there is something almost magical about it, and views it as an object greater than human existence. This last phase is characterized by an expansion of ideas and metaphors.

In apocalyptic natural disaster plots, the sublime is often linked to the potential for danger. Edmund Burke explains how the tension found in terror is similar to the tension in the second stage of the sublime, where the person finds himself suddenly unable to comprehend the object. Burke writes:

Having considered terror as producing an unnatural ten-

sion and certain violent emotions of the nerves, it easily follows, from what we have just said, that whatever is fitted to produce such a tension must be productive of a passion similar to terror; and consequently must be a source of the sublime... (Burke 253)

The sublimity of natural disasters comes from this sublimity of terror as well as the sublimity of wilderness itself. What is sublime about natural disasters is not just the powerful elements of nature, but the way that these enter and intrude upon the human realm. The combination of destructive wilderness in familiar human setting is frightening and unnerving, creating a strong tension between the viewer and the object, in this case the natural elements. In natural disaster apocalyptic plots, this sublime terror is often shown using characteristics from third stage of the sublime, employing descriptive language and metaphors that attempt to grasp a concept that is ungraspable, and from it transform the natural elements into an object of transcendence.

One good example of this use of sublime in natural disaster plots is in the 1962 novel *The Drowned World* by J. G. Ballard. While written in the 1960s, before the increasing awareness of global warming, it still embodies many of the feelings about natural disasters that are popular in our culture currently. In it, solar storms have caused the depletion of the Earth's ozone layer, causing the temperatures to rise. The story takes place sixty years after the beginning of the climate change, and the world has changed dramatically. Human life has greatly decreased, due to lower fertility and higher temperatures, and those people who are still living are forced to reside near the poles. The world has seemed to have reverted back into neo-Triassic times, with much of the life forms from that period

re-emerging in the lagoons. Kerans, the main character, is a biologist with a team studying the changes to the city of London, which is now a series of drowned buildings with canals between them. When the team decides to go North, Kerans and two other scientists, Beatrice and Bodkin, decide to stay in London even though they know they cannot survive there forever. When a new man named Strangman and his team of pirates arrive in the city with the intention of recovering drowned treasures, Kerans begins to become defensive over London in the drowned state it is in. Strangman uses a machine he created to drain the city. Bodkin becomes angry and tries to destroy the machine to drown the city again, but Strangman kills him. In the end, Kerans completes Bodkin's mission of drowning the city, then heads south on his own with no plan or goal.

The notion of the sublime is very prevalent in *The Drowned World*, especially in the way that nature interacts with mankind. The natural disaster, with its heat and rising sea levels, is both scary and mesmerizing, but it is not the natural elements themselves that create the sublime experience but the way that they interact with human civilization. The sublimity of natural disasters is reliant on the terror they create, and without the interaction of the disaster and the city, nature and man, there would be no threat. Elana Gomel writes in her essay, "J.G. Ballard and the Ethics and Aesthetics of the End of Time" that *The Drowned World* "develops a rich tapestry of lush metaphors, literary allusions, and dream-like landscapes" (200). Ballard's writing style is characteristic of the third stage of the sublime that Weiskel writes about, where man has to form a new relation between himself and the sublime object that explains the feeling of transcendence. The sublime experience in *The Drowned World* results from the combination of man and nature, and the way that

Ballard portrays this is through wandering, expanding, allusionistic thoughts of the characters and his own narration.

Bodkin, one of the three scientists that stay behind in the drowned London, is a character for whom the floods constantly create sublimity. He had grown up in London as a child, so the experience of returning back to his hometown and finding it flooded and destroyed by nature is a sublime one. The sublime relies on tension to create its effect, and the contrast Bodkin observes between places that he knows so well and the nature invading them achieves this tension.

Bodkin had become lost in his private reverie, punting aimlessly around the narrow creeks in search of the submerged world of his childhood. Once Kerans came across him resting on an oar in the stern of his small metal scow and gazing vacantly at the unyielding buildings around him. He had stared straight through Kerans, failing to acknowledge his call. (84)

Bodkin, upon encountering the sublime, becomes lost. His understanding of London as his childhood home has been disrupted, and he searches for a new way to comprehend the city and his relation to it. He doesn't answer to Kerans because he is so lost in thought, attempting to find a way to make sense of the sublime object. This new understanding he is searching for is a way of transcending the mere human experience, a way of coming to terms with what is happening. The sublimity he experiences is from the juxtaposition of the city he knows so well with nature. If Bodkins had simply been looking at floods in nature, out of the context of city, they would not have the same effect as they do in a human setting.

In one of the most sublime scenes of the novel, Strangman convinces Kerans to dive underwater to look for treasure in a sub-

merged planetarium. While he is underwater he looks up at the domed ceiling, and notices that cracks at the top have allowed light to shine through, as if they were stars.

He gazed up at this unfamiliar zodiac, watching it emerge before his eyes like the first vision of some pelagic Cortez emerging from the oceanic deeps to glimpse the immense Pacifics of the open sky... Gradually, as the minutes passed, the preservation of this distant zodiac, perhaps the very configuration of constellations that had encompassed the Earth doing the Triassic Period, seemed to Kerans a task more important than any other facing him. (108)

Kerans, as well as mankind in general, have a pre-formed relation between themselves and the stars. We know that wherever we are, we will be able to look up at the sky and see the same constellations that have been around since humanity's beginnings. The sublime disrupts a person's pre-established relationship with the object, and this exactly what happens in this passage. Kerans is faced with a new set of stars to gaze up at, and must find a new way to connect himself to them, turning the stars into an object of transcendence. He does this by thinking of the stars as the stars that could've existed before the emergence of humans. What is interesting, though, is that the stars are formed from a man-made planetarium ceiling. Though Kerans is experiencing the sublimity of nature, it is not the sublimity of pure wilderness, of human-less existence, but the sublimity that is created by the combination of nature and mankind. This is further demonstrated when Kerans' air supply stops and he begins to lose consciousness.

He lay back, spreadeagled across the steps, his hand pressed numbly against the loop of line around the door handle, the

soothing pressure of the water penetrating his suit so that the barriers between his own private bloodstream and that of the giant amnion seemed no longer to exist. The deep cradle of silt carried him gently like an immense placenta, infinitely softer than any bed he had ever known. (110)

In this quote, Kerans is experiencing a sensation that makes it seem as if he is becoming a part of nature. It is a very surreal and oddly comforting experience, and even though Kerans is in danger, he experiences more of a sublime terror opposed to the simple fear of death. He is losing consciousness so he is not completely aware of the immediate danger that his situation poses, and instead is focused on the sublime nature of the experience. He seems to enjoy it even despite the possibility of death. Later, Strangman even remarks that Kerans purposefully tried to drown. "He anchored that cable himself, quite deliberately. Why?" Here Strangman tapped the air magisterially. 'Because he *wanted* to become part of *The Drowned World*' (111)." Kerans has a strong desire to melt into nature in an existence that is both human and wild, because the combining of the human and natural worlds lies the sublime.

When Strangman drains the lagoon in order to better search for treasure, Kerans feels lost. He no longer sees his surroundings as sublime once the natural elements, the water and its lifeforms, are removed. Ballard writes:

During the next days events proceeded to even greater madness. Increasingly disorientated, Kerans would wander alone through the dark streets at night—by day it became unbearably hot in the labyrinth of alleyways—unable to tear himself away from his memories of the old lagoon, yet at the same time locked fast to the empty streets and gutted buildings.

After his first surprise at seeing the drained lagoon he began to sink rapidly into a state of dulled inertia, from which he tried helplessly to rouse himself. Dimly he realized that the lagoon had represented a complex of neuronc needs that were impossible to satisfy by any other means. (128)

After the draining of the city, Kerans is suddenly confronted with the harsh realities of the decaying human world and the increasing heat. Where previously he was still aware that humankind was dying out, it was not as threatening since it was experienced as sublime. When the water is removed, Kerans is no longer part of a confluence of nature and humans but an exile in a world where he feels far from nature. He feels locked to his man-made surroundings, but at the same time he recognizes that he cannot live without the lagoon, without the melding of nature into the human setting. Now that he has experienced the sublimity of the combination of man and nature, he has a new understanding of its importance. Without it, he is lost. Kerans is saved, but later on after the city is drained he visits the planetarium now that it is no longer submerged.

No longer the velvet mantle he remembered from his descent, it was now a fragmenting cloak of rotting organic forms, like the vestments of the grave. The once translucent threshold of the womb had vanished, its place taken by the gateway to a sewer. (127)

The scene of a previously sublime and beautiful experience is now dead and meaningless to him. Nature is present, but it is in the form of dying organisms, and doesn't exactly represent an effective combination with mankind. In *The Drowned World*, the occurrence of sublime experiences is completely dependent on the relationship between mankind and nature, and is only possible when they exist

together fluidly.

In "The Trouble With Wilderness", William Cronon points out the dangers that exist from viewing nature as sublime. If nature is viewed as something too sublime, people consider it as something "other" and outside themselves, and cannot comprehend their role within it and nature's role within themselves. The use of the sublime in *The Drowned World*, and in many other similar plots, is different though, and presents a way for the sublime to be used in a positive way. Cronon points out that trouble arises when nature is sublime, but in this situation what is sublime is the *joining of nature and mankind*. If we distance ourselves from nature through thinking of it as sublime, real environmental progress is not possible because in reality, there is no such thing as nature without humans. If we are ignorant to the fact that nature is not just pristine wilderness, we will never realize that nature is everywhere, and fixing problems in nature also means fixing problems with our lives and cities.

When creating this idea of us being included in nature as part of the sublime, it is critical that it must not be that nature is no longer amazing to us. In his essay "toward and Ecological Sublime", Christopher Hitt explains the danger of thinking of ourselves as overly connected to nature, specifically in the case of ecocatastrophes. If we consider that we have an effect on nature, that our actions may be the cause of the disasters, then we will no longer be motivated to do anything about it because we will not feel as threatened. We will assume that everything will work out and that the solution is already in our control.

...Our reliance on technology to deliver us from the crisis is the familiar third stage of the sublime in a new guise, a stage which is supposed to end in a glorious conquest. So we wait,

secure in the notion that a happy ending is guaranteed...

And in the meantime, things are only getting worse. (13)

It is necessary to not completely abandon the idea of nature as separate from humans, because this otherness of nature is vital in sparking motivation to act. If we think of nature as being easily under our control, of ourselves as easily being able to fix it, we will have a false sense of security. We will assume that the technology to form solutions already exists, and that there is no real call to action since the way to fix the problem is already in our hands. Hitt writes:

...Reason can never master nature. There will always be limits to our knowledge, and nature will always be, finally, impenetrable. An ecological sublime would remind us of this lesson by restoring the wonder, the inaccessibility of wild nature. In an age of exploitation, commodification, and domination we need awe, envelopment, and transcendence. (13)

It is important that this new eco-sublime does not overly emphasize our inclusion or one-ness with nature. Over-emphasized one-ness makes us feel like it is simple to change nature for the better, and without recognizing that nature is something separate from ourselves it is hard to realize it isn't something we cannot easily control. Creating solutions to environmental problems is a difficult task, and it is necessary that people recognize this and become motivated to work hard. If we view nature and ourselves as the same thing, the solution will seem too easily within our own control for people to feel the need to act.

The eco-sublime that I am proposing, the one that is found in *The Drowned World* as well as many other natural disaster apocalyptic plots, is one that walks the middle ground between Cronon

and Hitt's views on nature as sublime. Cronon stresses the importance of considering the one-ness of nature and man, and Hitt argues that nature should not necessarily be so intertwined with man, and that is important for nature to be othered in order to create interest. My version of the ecosublime focuses the effects of nature and man being together and juxtaposed, but not as fused. They are together in close proximity, and the contrast and relationship between them is the object of the sublimity. In *The Drowned World*, the sublimity of the flood does not come from the buildings and water being part of the same thing, but from their placement next to each other, from their unfamiliar closeness. By doing this, the benefits of both Cronon and Hitt's arguments are achieved. Their proximity to each other helps draw attention to the fact that they are related and that they have effects on each other, just as Cronon believes is important. At the same time though, nature is still seen as a separate force with incomprehensible power. This provides the awe that Hitt believes is necessary to motivate people to action. One way to put it is that by portraying the closeness of man and nature as sublime, nature is still being othered, but it is as a near other instead of a *distant* other. Nature is still seen as separate from mankind and outside the human realm, but their interdependence is stressed. It allows us to see nature as something that is closely related to us and not only found in pure, human-less wilderness, as well as providing the right amount of amazement to motivate us to action.

When viewed in terms of the eco-sublime I have proposed, *The Drowned World* and other similar plots are not nearly as pessimistic as they may seem. While they do describe the destruction of our entire civilization, they also form the mind-set that is needed to create real environmental change. It is important to remember

that the stories are stories, and a death of humankind in the story does not necessarily imply a death of humankind in real life. What is real is the way the story affects the reader. *The Drowned World* and similar examples are able to create both an understanding of the interlocking of man and nature, that nature isn't only human-less wilderness, and the awe and motivation to do something about it. If our society is able to think in this way, real environmental progress is possible. We will be able to understand the importance of our actions on the nature around us, even within cities, instead of just preserving distant wilderness. We will also be able to see nature as something worth saving, something beautiful and amazing. When seen through the eco-sublime, the end of the world has never been so hopeful.

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THE ILLUSION OF A DARK HALF

Fiction writers construct intricate worlds in which characters battle imaginary monsters, celebrate made-up victories, and live their fictitious lives. Authors often utilize rhetorical strategies, personification, and imagery to make their invented worlds and characters more believable. Although these worlds are sometimes representative of reality, the realm of creative writing remains a separate artistic entity detached from real-

ity. One of novelists' goals in creating separate worlds is to trick the audience into believing that their created world and characters (could) exist. Curiously, while convincing the audience, many fiction writers begin to believe that their characters are truly autonomous beings, separate from their imagination and control. This disassociate experience, an altered state of consciousness which authors experience while writing, is described by the term "the illusion of independent agency" (IIA), coined in a study by Taylor, Hodges and Kohanyi.¹ The illusion of independent agency influences the enigmatic creative writing process by facilitating the creation of imaginary worlds. Numerous fiction writers who have claimed to experience this phenomenon reported that they have interacted with, observed, or took dictation from their creations (Taylor, 1). The study also suggests that it is a common and welcome occurrence. Writers who have this experience are often more popular and successful than writers who do not experience IIA. The study suggests the phenomenon helps authors write better overall, because it facilitates creativity.

Although the study illustrates IIA's positive effects on the writer's ability, literary evidence shows that the illusion can also instigate anxiety and be psychologically damaging. When dangerous villainous characters are seemingly real, the danger—the creation—begins to haunt the creator. Stephen King's *The Dark Half* and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Grey* both suggest psychological negative consequences, although in fictional situations, and

¹ The study was conducted at the University of Oregon in 2003. They interviewed fifty (anonymous) fiction authors from various backgrounds. Ninety-two percent of the authors interviewed reported having experienced the phenomenon at least once. Accumulatively the fiction authors scored higher than non-fiction authors in terms of empathy, dissociation, and memories of childhood imaginary companions (five of them still have childhood imaginary companions).

the potential creation of a "double." Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* depicts a young man, Dorian Gray, who is tormented by a disturbing aging self-portrait. In Stephen King's *The Dark Half*, a young fiction writer's pseudonym manifests into a deadly man. King and Wilde use these fictional representations of the phenomenon to portray the negative effects of the illusion of independent agency in their respective novels and characters. Each novel illustrates psychological conflict between the fictional creator and the creation, and the negative consequences that follow. Although both texts are works of fiction and thus illustrate fictional examples of the phenomenon, King and Wilde use the novels to explore their real world problem of perceived separation between themselves and their imaginary characters in a fictional setting.

Oscar Wilde was an Irish gothic novelist who wrote poetry, prose and drama in the late 1800s, primarily in London. His only published novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a philosophical novel that explores the theme of gothic doubles, which directly illustrates the concept of IIA and its resulting harmful psychological effects through the main protagonist. Both the genre's specific theme of 'doubles', as well as the narrative, cohere together to illustrate the terrifying idea that inspiration and artistic work, including paintings, can break from the creators control, obtain autonomy, and threaten their originator.

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Basil Hallward is an old, hopeless, romantic painter who becomes obsessed with a young man he claims is the essence of aesthetic beauty, inspiration and creativity. His muse is the cultured, young and beautiful, but superficial Dorian Gray. Dorian is only concerned with his appearance and does not aspire to learn. Basil paints an attractive portrait of

Dorian, and Dorian immediately envies the painting that will never age. Dorian decides to “sell his soul” to stop his loveliness from fading, and instead remain as flawless as Basil’s acrylic canvas. Consequently, Dorian stops physically maturing and instead the painting grows old. However, the picture is not as shallow as Dorian. With each “sin” Dorian commits, including the eventual murder of Basil, the painting not only ages with wrinkles but also becomes increasingly mutilated, reflecting Dorian’s corruption and immoral behavior. Eventually the once idyllic picture no longer represents the youthful innocent boy, but instead illustrates Dorian’s transformation into a withered, soulless man.

As the painting withers, Dorian becomes tormented by the image, believing it to be alive. This belief that the painting has an identity can be thought of as a delusion, a belief that is contradictory to what is generally accepted as reality. Specifically, Dorian’s delusion is that he alone consistently sees changes in the portrait after he commits sins; “What the worm was to the corpse, his sins would be to the painted image on the canvas. They would mar its beauty, and eat away its grace. They would defile it, and make it shameful. And yet the thing would still live on. It would be always alive” (Wilde, 115). In reality, pictures do not change without the hand of their creator and are certainly not living. However, as in the illusion of independent agency, Dorian truly believes that the picture has self-determined action, and he no longer is in control. In an attempt to escape the delusion, he conceals the portrait in an attic saying, “Now [the satin coverlet] was to hide something that had a corruption of its own, worse than the corruption of death itself—something that would breed horrors and yet would never die” (Wilde, 115). This further illustrates the belief that the

picture has the ability to influence Dorian and facilitate his corruption. Psychologically, Dorian is depressed and believes he has lost control over the image and his life. However, he does have control as the painting only transforms because of Dorian’s actions. This is important because he does have control over his delusion, the painting, and thus its psychological effects. He only believes it has independent agency, and this certainty consumes him.

While Dorian continues obsessing over the painting, Basil returns to Dorian’s house eighteen years later to learn if the rumors of Dorian’s never-changing face are true. Dorian reveals the picture to Basil, and the horrendous state of his once beautiful creation stuns him. In rage, Dorian blames Basil for cursing him, and painting a beautiful picture he could never fulfill. Then “. . . suddenly an uncontrollable feeling of hatred for Basil Hallward came over him, as though it had been suggested to him by the image on the canvas, whispered into his ear by those grinning lips” (Wilde, 151). A shimmering reflection off the canvas casts light on a knife that Dorian immediately grabs and repeatedly digs into Basil’s head, “crushing the man’s head down on the table, and stabbing again and again,” killing him (Wilde, 151). This abrupt act of intense rage further emphasizes the picture’s influential power over Dorian’s psyche. Dorian personifies the canvas, which “whispered into his ears,” and this drives him to murder his once dear friend.

Consumed by his murderous debaucheries and superficiality, in a desperate effort to end his own emotional and psychological suffering, Dorian eventually stabs the hideous diminished canvas in the heart. Hearing a scream, the servants of his house arrive at the attic to find a disfigured withered corpse on the floor with a knife in his chest, dead. The painting is fully uncovered showcas-

ing Basil's original masterpiece—an angelic innocent boy. The ring on the body's finger is the only indication the corpse is Dorian. This dark ending is startling and further illustrates that the painting was a reflection of the true Dorian. Now lifeless, he is no longer beautiful, thus metaphorically illustrating the negative effects of the split between the creator and creation.

Although Basil painted the beautiful portrait of Dorian, he is not a fiction writer experiencing fictitious characters coming to life. However, painters are known to experience the presence of autonomous characters as inspiration while painting. Mary Watkins, a child psychologist who specializes in research about imaginary characters and the people who create them, claims in *The Invisible Guests* that “Although painters often work from form and color as much as from imagined beings, these too are often experienced as presences who suggest themselves to the artist from outside” (178). This means that while painting, artists experience the canvas suggesting to them what to create or separate imaginary entities (such as imaginary friends) also speaking to them. The aging canvas in *Dorian Gray*, like the delusions of interacting with, or observing fictional characters, is the fictional character in this case. Therefore, although Basil is not a fiction writer, as a painter and artist, he can still experience the illusion of independent agency.

Another seeming discrepancy with applying the illusion to this novel is that Dorian is not the creator of the self-portrait, or its “author”. This difference from the usual examples of the illusion does not discredit Wilde's novel as a representation of anxiety about the disconnection between the creator and the creation. Dorian still believes that the painting has autonomy, although his own actions transform the painting; as fiction authors similarly

believe their characters to have autonomy, although the authors are still the ones ultimately writing (transforming) the novel. And just as the delusions represent fiction authors' imaginations, the painting reflects Dorian's psyche. Furthermore, Basil, the original painter, also sees the painting and instantly accepts the same delusions, and the transformation of his creation dismays him. However, in the end of the novel, the servants see the painting as it was before, therefore they never see or participate in Dorian's and Basil's delusions that the picture has autonomous agency. This makes the delusion into something solely experienced by the creators, illustrating personal psychological issues the creator must solve alone or risk creating a dark “double.”

The theme of “doubles,” sometimes referred to as a “gothic monster” reoccurs throughout this gothic novel, as Dorian's double is the painting (Dryden, 123). The gothic theme of literary doubles, or doppelgangers, is relevant to the negative effects of the illusion of independent agency because it represents the “dark” side of ordinary people and characters, including authors and in this case, painters. This gothic monster is considered a “warning of what might happen” if a character fails to self-discipline, or contain their desires (Dryden, 123). That idea also coincides with IIA because developing an evil double might happen if the author, or artist, cannot discipline (control) their creations—thus resulting in psychological damage from the out-of-control creation. This “dark side” certainly grows from the imagination and unsatisfied desires of the creator. In addition, because the double stems from the imagination of the creator, it is also a reflection of character, often exhibiting a darker, and more violent and malicious side. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Lord Henry advises young Dorian, “Resist

[the desire to sin], and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden to itself, with desire for what its monstrous laws have made monstrous and unlawful. It has been said that the great events of the world take place in the brain. It is in the brain and the brain only, that the great sins of the world take place also” (Wilde, 15). This is a warning to Dorian about what happens when one contains too many desires, and a foreshadowing of the immoral life Dorian will later live.

The novel continues to maintain the theme of duality, as Dorian’s double first causes him to experience social and psychological death, and eventual physical death. Typically, in gothic novels with doubles, for example *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, only one of the pair can survive, and while both are alive they both suffer due to the internal struggle over complete control. This reflects the disconnect artists, and authors, feel from their character creations, as they believe psychologically the characters have autonomy, as gothic doubles do, though in both cases the creator has control in reality. Because the artists feel a lack of control, emotional distress results that will not end until the creator regains control over the creation or double, or one of the pair dies. However, it is unlikely that the creator will regain control over the double, because once the manifestation of the creator’s desires are unleashed, they creation will refuse to be once again silenced. In *Dorian Gray*, Dorian attempts to kill his double, but by stabbing the painting, he instead has stabbed and killed himself—ending the pain in an unexpected way. Although real fictions authors and artists do not stab books, and instead stab themselves, this is an excellent example of creating a fictional double and trying to “kill it.” Real-life authors may try to end their relationship with an alter ego, or gothic double,

through psychotherapy; or in as we will see later in *The Dark Half*, authors stop writing novels under their counterparts inspiration (e.g. stop using a pen-name, or writing about certain characters

Wilde’s personal experience with writing *The Picture of Dorian Gray* also strengthens the way in which the novel illustrates the illusion, as the characters in the novel represent real people in Wilde’s life, as well as himself. In a letter to an unidentified recipient Wilde wrote “Basil Hallward is what I think I am: Lord Henry what the world thinks me: Dorian what I would like to be — in other ages, perhaps” (Holland, 585). This quote reveals Wilde’s intimate relationship to his fictional characters, especially Basil—who likewise is an artist. Wilde also parallels Basil’s obsession with a young man, as Wilde becomes similarly infatuated with Lord Alfred Douglas, which is also documented in Wilde’s letters to Douglas (Dawson, 1). Wilde’s self-identification with the characters suggests a parallel between Wilde’s own life experiences while writing (and perhaps experiences with IIA) and that of his characters and their relationships with their creations.

This novel expresses the creator’s anxiety about the disconnect between himself and creation, the psychological disturbances and the creation of dark doubles from the imagination. Although Dorian did not directly create the painting, he established a psychological connection with it in which he influenced the painting’s unsettling changes, and in return was emotionally disturbed by his double’s appearance. However, the ending of the novel causes the audience to question whether something supernatural occurred or if Dorian was merely mad the entire novel, and simply imagined he was still young and beautiful, while the painting simply remained a painting. This sense of doubt is significant because the illusion

of independent agency is usually only experienced by the creator, but with this novel, readers also experience the illusion as they witnessing Dorian's immortal youth. As Oscar Wilde illustrates the intimate and hazardous relationship between a creator and his creation, Stephen King shares these concerns in *The Dark Half*.

Stephen King's expansive collection of horror novels and number one bestsellers qualify him as a successful, creative, and outlandish American contemporary fiction novelist. Stephen King has personal experience writing under several pen names, most famously as Richard Bachman. King's eccentric and violently graphic horror novels are well known for their dark themes and unresolved gloomy endings. *The Dark Half* depicts the story of the writer Thad Beaumont and his family in Maine as they battle Thad's out of control imaginary creation—George Stark. Accomplished fiction writer Thad experiences lingering nightmares in which his pen name, George Stark, manifests into a deadly man. Subsequently, Thad's terrifying delusions become reality. His pseudonym comes to life and demands Thad to finish writing his novels. Although such delusions where the persona behind pen names become real monsters do not actualize in reality, Thad's conception of Stark is a prime example of the illusion of independent agency, the creation of a dark double, and its devastating psychological effects.

Thad's experience of IIA is at first ordinary, but quickly becomes mystical when his imagined dark half comes to life. To appease the pen-name Thad abandons his typewriter, because Stark only writes with pencils (King, 26). With the pencil, Stark is explicit, violent, and blood-driven in his novels. Thad, under Stark's inspiration, writes a very successful series called *Machine's Way*. The protagonist, Alexis Machine, wields a pearl-handled

straight razor with which he disfigures victims for game. Although the Alexis Machine novels are graphically disturbing, Thad gains popularity and monetary success he never knew when writing safe mystery novels under his own name. This demonstrates that the illusion of the pen name and character's reality increased his capacity for creativity, and allow him to become lost in "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 74). "Flow" is an altered state of consciousness in which authors and artists become lost in thought and absorbed completely by the task. Csikszentmihalyi, a psychology professor who researches "flow," defines the concept of flow as the optimal state of consciousness where "skills match the opportunities for action" (6). Flow provides "a creative feeling of transporting the person into a new reality" (74). This concept is important to the illusion of independent agency, specifically in Thad's case, because his experience writing under Stark illustrates being lost in flow—specifically the flow of writing and being under a trance-like state. For example, his wife, Liz, was not allowed to disturb Thad during the hours he spent locked away in the study with black pencils, while Stark was lurking in the shadows feeding his creative edge. Flow facilitated Thad's ability to write, and thus also facilitated the illusion that Stark was an independent persona. However, the problem began when a trusted friend revealed Thad's identity as Stark, and Thad decided to end his career writing under Stark.

Thad first tries to end his relationship with Stark when he poses for People Magazine. The reporter has made a makeshift grave and tombstone for Stark. It says simply, "GEORGE STARK, 1975–1988, Not a Very Nice Guy" (King, 21). The next morning, the gravedigger finds the grave spot ripped open—as if someone has desperately clawed his way out. Stark, who was not actu-

ally buried, manifests from Thad's mind and the empty grave and becomes a man. Stark becomes a reality only to force Thad to finish the Alexis Machine series and murder the individual who revealed their pseudonym. Simultaneously, Stark consumes Thad's imagination and nightmares, as he begins to murder with Alexis Machine's weapon of choice—the straight razor. This section of the novel crosses the barrier of fantasy and reality, as other characters, including Thad's wife, the police chief, and townspeople witness Stark to be real. He is no longer safely locked in Thad's pencils and study, but living out the novels in the real world. This is different from other cases of the illusion because other characters besides the creator are participating, believing, and in this case seeing the materialization of the creation. This is central to the theme of the novel because when others can see the manifestation of the illusion, the problem affects others as well as the creator. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, other characters never saw the monster, only the effects on Dorian, whereas in *The Dark Half* other characters can see both the monster and Thad's emotional distress.

However, the characters in *The Dark Half*, including the sheriff investigating the murders, Alan Pangborn, question the existence of Stark before physically seeing him. Traces left at the murder scene are bloody perfect fingerprints—identical to Thad's. This physical similarity between Thad and Stark further illustrates that, although Stark is a brutal murderer, he shares Thad's mind as well as body, further becoming Thad's "dark half" deemed by the title, or his literary gothic double. Thad mentions that even identical twins have different fingerprints, so it alarms Thad more to realize how close Stark and him are connected. This connection is foreshadowed in the beginning of the book when Alan Pangborn first

questions Thad about the bloody fingerprints at the murder scene. Thad defends himself using a line Stark wrote, "[she] wouldn't lie me an alibi" (King, 85). Immediately Thad realizes "he'd never used a Stark-ism in a conversation before. On the other hand, he had never been accused of murder before, either, and murder was George Stark kind of situation" (King, 85). This foreshadows the mental unity between the characters as well as Stark's murderous rampage.

The idea of doubles and dark twins is also mirrored in Thad's two babies—who are fraternal twins, so despite being female and male seem identical. The theme of duality and having a dark side is an integral theme to this novel, not only because of its title. The theme of duality in the novel revolves around good and bad characters, and in this situation, Thad is the "good" half, and Stark is Thad's "dark half," or alter ego (Strengell, 69-71). Thad is caught in flow in the early stages of his experience with his illusion of independent agency, and gives in to his dark half to write better, more gruesome novels and gain success. Next, Thad tries to kill his dark side, but because it is a part of him, Stark attempts to disconnect from Thad physically in order to survive. However, throughout the novel Stark is deteriorating because he cannot survive outside of Thad's imagination, as they are the same person with one body.

At the end of the novel, Thad ultimately defeats Stark and lives, but the story is not completely resolved. Thad's wife, Liz, is anxious about their marital relationship, fearing that Stark was not only a part of Thad's creation, but that Thad actually enjoyed Stark's violent writing. This makes readers question if Stark is actually dead, or if he has just returned to Thad's imagination. Later Stephen King published *The Sun Dog* and *Bag of Bones*, which both

take place in the same town as *The Dark Half*. King also borrows the same police chief, Alan Pangborn, who then reveals that Liz has divorced Thad and taken the twins. The chief then discloses Thad committed suicide shortly after, due to alleged depression. This furthermore illustrates the illusion's damaging effects on Thad, because after the creation was supposedly defeated the illusion eventually caused Thad to also murder himself. Thad was unable to live without his double as he was still experiencing devastating emotional pain after supposedly killing his evil double and eliminating the mental illusion. This implies that although the illusion and its ability to breed violence can be conquered, the anxiety about lapsing and losing control will remain.

Thad's overall experience is a fictional reflection of Stephen King's anxiety. The delineation between reality and the author's fantasy is complex (Watkins). Watkins', a professor and child psychologist, mentions that "imagination is seen variously as a rather dangerous and tricky opponent of the real, as little more than mimic of the real, or as a helpmate to the real—always ready to rehearse for or react to moments of the real" (Watkins, 21). This implies that fiction is a direct reflection of real life trauma, beauty and horror; therefore, fantasy cannot be ignored, but also should not be confused with reality. This also implies that people portray reality, or parts of their perceived reality, into their artwork, and therefore can exaggerate reality or make it appear supernatural. The exaggerations are part of the border between reality and fantasy. These exaggerations may be representative of reality and therefore, like metaphors in literature, can be examined but do not transcend the border into reality.

When real-life and fictional authors, such as Thad, experi-

ence IIA, they are bending the boundary by having their dissociative experiences so vividly. Walton expresses that fictional worlds are important to explore and investigate, just as much as reality. They are not simply figments of imagination as they relate to the individual's sense of reality, and connect to reality (Walton). Therefore, if individuals' imaginative fantasy seems real to them it is a part of their perceived reality and we can thus explore the fantasy to understand the writer's perspective of the world. Overall, the fantasy of the novel reflects King's reality in several ways. Several events Thad experiences with Stark seem to underline King's relationship to his pseudonym Bachman, although King is still alive and writing. For example, Thad's relationship to the character who knew, protected, and revealed his pseudonym corresponds to the real life events of Stephen King (Strengell, 79). "King acknowledged prior to the publication of *The Dark Half* that Richard Bachman is the darker, more violent side of Stephen King, just as Stark is *The Dark Half* of Thad Beaumont" (Magistrale, 66). In addition, since *The Dark Half* was written after King was exposed as Bachman; the novel was a response and closure to his journey under his pen name. Thad also profited financially, as King did, and indulged in dark fantasies with Stark, as King did with Bachman. Furthermore, King's "Author's Note" before *The Dark Half* includes a note that this novel "could not have been written without [Bachman]," and he thanks Bachman for "his help and inspiration" (King). This suggests that Bachman gave King inspiration, meaning that Bachman is a separate entity from King. Therefore, Bachman is King's experience of IIA, because King writes as if Bachman is separate although King ultimately created him and his corresponding works. Ultimately, King's relationship described in the Author's

Note further illustrates the parallel between King and Bachman and Beaumont and Stark.

The parallel between King's experiences with IIA and his fictional character's experiences highlights the sharp disconnect between a creator and the creation and the chaos it can create. When the characters seem to take control of the novels, and the author is no longer in control, there is a mental fight for authority. This fight for authority is significant because it affects the author's psychological state, and the outcome of the creation (how the novel is written). This psychological conflict can sever the delicate line of reality that the author perceives. If the author perceives the imaginary character as autonomous and real, it is a part of the author's reality. This dangerous line between reality and fantasy is challenged by the author's belief in the character, and it can emotionally disrupt the author, and cause anxiety and fear. Currently, King is no longer known to write under pseudonyms, and continues to publish successful novels, which are still considered exceptionally dark and violent, possibly due to the lingering persona of Richard Bachman. Bachman's lingering persona in Stephen King illustrates King's experiences with the illusion of independent agency and strengthens how he relates to the characters in his novel, which also experiences the illusion, and its negative consequences of a dark half. Perhaps, as Thad was still consumed by his defeated dark half, Stephen King may still be inspired by Bachman.

Both King and Wilde, as they face their dark counterparts, share anxiety and display terror through their protagonists. Similarly, both novels result in death of the main characters, Dorian and Thad, through self-inflicted death. Even though both novels exhibit the illusion differently and the characters' experiences are

through different mediums of art, they both still enter a world of threatening fictitious creations. Although both are purely fantasy novels and creations cannot possess pictures or carve the faces of their creators with pearl-handled straight razors, it is a powerful metaphor for their positive creative influences but also psychological destruction and ability to consume the psyche, while trying to transcend the invisible border between reality and fantasy. Both novels demonstrate the detrimental emotional effects fiction authors, and artists, experience because of the illusion of independent agency. Fiction writers are not only able to suspend the belief of the audience through literary strategies, but many are skillful enough to trick themselves. The more investment the author has in creating the deception, the more intense the imaginary world seems, the more consumed the author is in the perceived world, the more captivated the audience becomes as well. Truly, the most intricate and most dangerous trick the author plays is the one he plays on himself.

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JENNA WESTOVER

Jenna Westover is a sophomore at the University of Oregon. She fell in love with David Foster Wallace over the course of eleven pages, all of them dedicated to a short story entitled "Forever Overhead". As all meaningful art reminds us, laughter and sadness, irony and earnestness, theatricality and the ordinary often come from the same place; the human condition is a fragile one, and Wallace was a consistent source of comfort to her for providing this reminder. She once adapted parts of *Infinite Jest* to a television pilot entitled *American Medicine*; created portraits based on *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*; and, of course, produced her research essay, with the aid of her wonderful mentor Susi Gomez, on *The Pale King*. Much more essential than creating art, though, Wallace encourages her to view the world as a work of art; he inspires her to maintain the ability to have spine and retain sensitivity, as well the ability to handle the girth of life's setbacks with aplomb.

Mentor: **Susi Gomez**

BORED OUT OF YOUR MIND:

SELF PRESERVATION IN DAVID FOSTER WALLACE'S *THE PALE KING*

David Foster Wallace's *The Pale King* chronicles tedium, induces tedium, and tests the reader's tolerance for tedium. Focusing on the various psychological tics and experiences of childhood trauma of various workers at the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in Peoria, Illinois, Wallace reflects in the novel upon what he referred to in a 2005 commencement speech at Kenyon College as "the most obvious, important realities [that]

are often the ones that are hardest to see and talk about... the day to day trenches of adult existence, banal platitudes [that] have a life or death importance.” This is of particular interest as Wallace’s larger body of work reflects upon entertainment and addiction in postmodern America. For instance, Wallace’s *Infinite Jest* (1996), arguably his magnum opus, is often referred to as the prequel to *The Pale King*. However, in the same places *Infinite Jest* suggests death by pleasure, by indulgence, by feeding the American addiction with addiction itself, *The Pale King* suggests a slower death—a gradual descent into the slough of monotony.

In this paper, I will discuss how Wallace uses the the corporeal to explain the arrival of boredom and, most specifically, the fears and anxieties that serve as an impetus to succumb to these “trenches of adult life”. The two characters I will be focusing on display fear as layered fears—fears that appear linear, contained, foreseeably conquerable, but at once metastasize into larger fears that pertain to that which negates boredom: the fear of liveliness. Specifically, I will examine David Cusk, whose fear of profuse sweating is surmounted by a larger fear of being rejected on the premise of being human. I will also look at Lane A. Dean Jr., whose fear of his religious girlfriend’s pregnancy later reveals itself as the fear that the strength of his convictions cannot buoy his sense of vitality, humanity, being.

Foremost, David Cusk is one of the main characters of *The Pale King*. His experience as a sixteen and a half year old boy is littered with an array of tics and traumas—the chief among them being his fear of sweating profusely in public. Much more than his fear of sweat, the fear of the fear itself is what his narrative focuses on.

With great tenderness, Cusk’s experiences as a teenaged boy and as a member of the IRS are bridged. The narrative voice announces, “It was in public high school that this boy learned the terrible power of attention and what you pay attention to” (91). Thematically, Cusk as a character allows the exploration of the notion of anxiety and how it impedes attention, or courts it at best, by discussing anecdotes of his sweating. To that end, it is of cardinal importance to remember that the aforementioned “power of attention” is not dependent on adolescence alone. Rather, the sweat serves a literal outpour of his chemical anxiety as a teenager in his journey toward his life as a man working at the IRS.

Initially, Cusk tells us about the act of sweating when situated in a public venue. He envisions what others must see when they look at him: “His face gleaming with a mixture of sebum and sweat, his shirt sodden at the collar and the pits, his hair separated into wet little creepy spikes from his head’s running sweat” (92). This passage is striking as he is dealing with a fear which is inescapably human: sweat. The overtly hyperbolized characterization of something so ordinary informs the reader of the severity of his fear. Objectively speaking, sweat has no place on the list of “things-to-be-fearful-of”, which is precisely why he is so wary of it. Henceforth, he positions himself in various places in the room: he devotes close attention—the attention referred to at the beginning of this passage—to where girls thick with puberty sit, where the radiator is blowing, where inconveniently placed opportunities for ventilation find themselves.

The introduction to Cusk’s fear of sweating in public venues is essential. However, it is arguably of equal, or of even more importance, to examine his fear of sweating in environments

that lack human interaction. Considering this, he volunteers that when Autumn rolls in, or when PE class is finished, or most frequently, when he is “in private, at home in his room, reading—with the door closed, it (his sweat) often [doesn’t] even occur to him” (94). Albeit briefly, he exists without the entertainment of his own worry; consequentially, he exists without sweat, but then the fear of the fear *itself* prevails. In large part, this scene—in his bedroom, alone—is precisely where the stakes are set so high as to coerce the reader into considering the “soaring, ceilingless tedium that transcends tedium and becomes worry,” in the venue of both a teenaged boy’s bedroom and a cubicle that invites anesthetization (253).

In effect, this scenario causes the reader to carefully consider the impetus of Cusk: Why has he come to work for the IRS? According to Wallace, the IRS functions as an environment similar to the teenaged boy’s bedroom, which precludes social interaction, internalized fear, all relics of psychological trauma and its predecessors. The sweat functions in Cusk’s story to posit the popularized conception of the American Dream—success, wives planted in suburbia, money—as more of a nightmarish byproduct of an array of fears and anxieties. The American Dream becomes the American nightmare, as Wallace depicts the struggles of Cusk’s journey; the IRS is just faulted as the host of said byproduct.

The narrative voice continues, and concludes, with a discussion of Cusk’s nightmares as a child, in order to offer an insight into the broader nightmare that is at hand. It states, “And the nightmare scenario that he dreaded more than anything was for him to be in the back and to start having such a shattering, uncontrollable attack that the teacher, all the way up at the front of the

room, noticed he was soaked and running with visible sweat and interrupted class to ask if he was all right, causing everyone to turn around in their chairs to look. In the nightmares, there was a literal spotlight on him as they all turned in their seats to see who the teacher was so worried and/or grossed out by” (99). Cusk regards this as a confirmation of his fear—the fear of others both seeing and smelling his sweat—thereby secreting his desire to continue in solitude.

Ultimately, what leaks out of Cusk, rather than sweat, is the fear of being rejected by all things human and vital. As we see in all of the bodily instances, boredom does not happen at random; it is only apparent as the byproduct of a fear for vitality.

Moreover, throughout the course of the text, the unraveling of vitality into pervasive tedium is what cradles the attention of the reader. In chapter six, the introduction of Lane A. Dean Jr. and his girlfriend, Sheri, provides another in-depth scenario of the layered fear as well as the segue from vitality to boredom. They sit on a picnic table in a park late in the spring. As the narrative voice states, the only other individual nearby is “a dozen spaced tables away by himself, standing upright, looking at the torn-up hole in the ground where the tree had gone over” (36). Lane Dean stares across the lake at the man for the entirety of the chapter, never making direct eye contact with Sheri. Lane Dean’s girlfriend has an abortion ahead of her, which Lane has assured her that he would attend with her; however, Sheri, ultimately, confesses at the end that she cannot go through with the abortion—her religious faith is of cardinal importance to her.

The reader is caught on an instance that seemingly negates boredom; the scene contains a lapping lake at sundown; a preg-

nant girl, whose heart interferes with death; and Lane Dean, as a teenager. Wallace uses these three things, these three sources of vitality, in order to set up the stakes for what Lane Dean is staring at across the lake: “He could see the man in the suit and gray hat standing motionless now at the lake’s rim, holding something under one arm and looking across at the opposite side where little forms on camp chairs sat there in a row...” (41).

Sheri and the proximal distance to the “man in the suit and the gray hat” force Lane Dean to elect a focal point. The notion of attention, which is also highlighted in the section on Cusk, is addressed here perfectly. The polarity between the visceral, pregnant, near-tears girlfriend and the abstraction of the man across the lake put Lane A. Dean Jr. to the test; it is the reader’s job to unpack this scenario and discover why Lane A. Dean Jr. immediately focuses on the man across the lake, rather than his girlfriend, Sheri.

Later in the text, Lane Dean is grown and working at the IRS. He bent with compliance as a teenaged boy in order to fulfill his duties as a husband, a father to the baby, and as a religious believer, but this does not, as the narrative voice would suggest, indicate that the man in the gray suit did not figure into Lane Dean’s future. The man in the gray suit is a symbol for the futuristic, flattened version of Lane Dean. It states, “...the only way a man ever really learns anything important, the real skill that is required to succeed in a bureaucracy. I mean really succeed: do good, make a difference, serve. I discovered the key... the key is a certain capacity that underlies all these qualities, rather the way that an ability to breathe and pump blood underlies all thought and action. The underlying bureaucratic key is the ability to deal with

boredom. To function effectively in an environment that precludes everything vital and human. The breathe, so to speak, without air” (438).

The fact that “An ability to breathe and pump blood underlies all thought and action” is significant because, on a larger scale, *The Pale King* details a very particular type of action; It details the conscious act of resignation to catatonia. The role of the term “function” is also of great importance in this context. As Wallace suggests, the IRS serves as a venue that hosts actions that have less to do with functionality, and more to do with succumbing to not functioning. Functioning retains the connotation of life, implying that livelihood and workmanship are two different entities that cannot coexist, but can certainly function as antecedents of one another.

Wallace’s nod to *The Pale King*, the 2005 Kenyon Commencement College address states that, “the unconscious, the default setting, the rat race, and the constant gnawing sense of having had, and lost, some infinite thing” which sets Lane Dean comfortably with his coworkers, including Cusk, at the IRS—charting numbers and computing data. It is not necessarily that the boredom is easy—but rather, so difficult as to consume time for all things that would otherwise be populated by what is vital, human, necessary.

On the same score, similarly to Cusk, the reader must not discount the power of fear—or the layered fear—in both of these characters’ lives. Lane Dean, at once so driven to Sheri because of her deep seriousness toward her religious beliefs, is also deeply terrified by the possibility that she might not go through with the abortion. And this fear of being terrified of Sheri’s convictions

manifests itself in Lane's fear that he is then, in effect, a hypocrite. "This was an awful thing," the narrative voice begins, "He was starting to believe he might not be serious in his faith. He might be somewhat of a hypocrite... who repented only after, who promised submission but really only wanted a reprieve" (37). "Promised submission" is a phrase that works as a lightning rod for critical interpretation. Lane A. Dean Jr.'s promising submission to God, after acting upon his shortcomings as a religious believer, is no different than his submission to his career as an accountant. The notion of submitting oneself to something suggests that said something is larger than they are, is insurmountable despite the futility in their own striving to divorce themselves from a moral frontier. Lane A. Dean Jr.'s submission to the IRS operates as a neglect of the hard purgatory of having to choose between vitality and ennui; the characters outlined throughout the course of *The Pale King* do not equate to being noncommittal, rather a commitment to nothing.

Finally, much as Cusk's fear of sweating moves to a larger, more general fear of all things vital, Lane Dean's fear of Sheri's pregnancy turns into a greater fear of withstanding the tests of his own convictions and beliefs. His position as an accountant, at the Internal Revenue Service of the United States reflects this fear, as the only fear left to have at the IRS is one of being replaced by a computer. This fear is the only acceptable one to both David Cusk and Lane A. Dean Jr., because it does not mean that they have lost to something alive, or have been overcome by something real; this fear just means that they are insufficient in terms of mechanical efficiency, not in terms of humanity itself.

Wallace uses both of these characters to share a broader

philosophy on dealing with life not at its most intense, but the importance of employing both civic virtue and awareness in the banal sluggishness of day-to-day monotony. He puts forth this philosophy to remind us that the layered fears of anxieties and distresses are not to be viewed as solely bad, or ill, or inconvenient, but rather as a reminder that wrestling with dullness is essential to staying alive in adult life—painful as it may be. David Cusk and Lane A. Dean Jr. are as close to protagonists as *The Pale King's* plot, or lack thereof, allows. Where a first readerly impulse typically equates protagonists to heroes, Wallace invites the reader to consider the heroism of both Cusk and Lane A. Dean Jr. on different terms: "...true heroism, not heroism... from films or the tales of childhood... The truth is that the heroism of childhood entertainments was not true valor. It was theater. The grand gesture, the moment of choice, the mortal danger, the external foe, the climactic battle whose outcome resolves all—all designed to appear heroic, to excite and gratify an audience. An audience... Welcome to the world of reality—there is no audience. No one to applaud, to admire. No one to see you... Actual heroism receives no ovation, entertains no one. No one queues up to see it. No one is interested" (229).

The "heroism of childhood entertainments" informs us of the importance of the antiheroism of both Lane A. Dean Jr. and David Cusk as adult men working at the IRS. Where the distraction of the aforementioned "audience" impedes tackling the petty, unsexy details of day-to-day life. Therefore, though "actual heroism receives no ovation" or "entertains no one", surviving the politics of bureaucratic gamesmanship, and the ability to get alone with one's thoughts, achieves something much greater than anything that is

applaudable; the antihero ultimately wins, despite the solitude required in this particular type of success.

Both David Cusk and Lane A. Dean Jr. exemplify a demotion from childhood to adult life; as they endure the responsibilities of adulthood, they leave (read: neglect) the traumas and tics of their varied childhoods. The fact that this book was left unfinished (as per Wallace's suicide in 2008) is not entirely besides the point—there is no convenient resolve to that which is left abandoned, untouched until eternity. These characters reminds us that ennui has no expiration date, rather a consistent role in the lives at a tax processing center in Peoria, Illinois.

To quote Wallace's 2005 Kenyon College Commencement Address: "This, like many clichés, so lame and unexciting on the surface, actually expresses a great and terrible truth. It is not the least bit coincidental that adults who commit suicide with firearms almost always shoot themselves in: the head. They shoot the terrible master. And the truth is that most of these suicides are actually dead long before they pull the trigger. That this is what the real, no bullshit value of education is supposed to be about: how to keep from going through your comfortable, prosperous, respectable adult life dead, unconscious, a slave to your head and to your natural default setting of being uniquely, completely, imperially alone day in and day out."

David Foster Wallace encourages us to stay alive and alert throughout the trenches and upsets of the unavoidable rat race; sweating, crying, panic, anxiety—these are signs of what addresses everything human and vital, everything difficult and, in Wallace's case, unbearable, unlivable. With his suicide shadowing *The Pale King*, these sentiments become much more real, much more tan-

gible. Boredom and death are mutually exclusive; liveliness respectively opposes them. However, there is a code that underlies all of these tales of tax codes and traumas abandoned. And Wallace reminds us to not expect anything easy in plain sight—that there are secrets within secrets, always.

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