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Trace

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## EDITOR'S COMMENTS

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**This edition of the *Nomad*** Undergraduate Journal revolves around the theme “Trace.” These essays invite us to follow left-behind imprints, to track journeys and paths, and to investigate familial and social influences. I have had the good fortune of editing four editions of the *Nomad* Undergraduate Journal, and every year I am struck by the depth and breadth of our students’ submissions. With the help of their mentors, the students in the *Nomad* Mentorship Program have spent the year developing and honing their ideas. They presented their work at our undergraduate conference, and the essays in this volume represent the culmination of their efforts. I am so proud of each of our students. It has been a great joy to watch you grow and flourish as sensitive and articulate writers and thinkers.

The *Nomad* Undergraduate Program and Journal would not be possible without a team of people who have supported our work. The heartiest of thanks goes to our mentors for the time and energy you have invested in our students. I would also like to thank the faculty and graduate students who presented at our *Nomad* Speaker Events: Prof. Fabienne Moore, Dr. Andréa Gilroy, Tera Reid-Olds, and Michelle Crowson. My thanks to Prof. Leah Middlebrook, Department Head of Comparative Literature, a constant and enthusiastic supporter of our program, and to our Office Manager, Cynthia Stockwell, whose dedication to this program is boundless. Finally, thank you to Mushira Habib and Pearl Lee, who served as our Mentorship Coordinators this year. Your thoughtfulness, creativity, and dedication have enriched this program greatly.

The *Nomad* Mentorship Program is a unique and essential creative outlet for undergraduates dedicated to literary research and writing. I am proud to have had the opportunity to work with this group of students, and, as my tenure as editor comes to a close, I am grateful to have been a part of this program and look forward to watching it develop, change, and grow.

Warmly,

BESS R. H. MYERS

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# RORY ALLEN

Rory Allen is a comparative literature and Japanese language major and a creative writing minor. She is interested in the social impact of storytelling, and how communities construct and communicate culture through stories. Outside of academics, her interests include education reform, marine conservation, and watching copious amounts of serial television.

Mentor: **Dr. Bess Myers**

## GIRLHOOD AND THE STRANGE: REPRESENTING THE FEMININE SUBJECT IN *STRANGER THINGS*

**THE “FEMININE SUBJECT” IN LITERATURE IS IN ITSELF A PARADOX.** When gender is constructed within a patriarchal culture, “man” is written whole and absolute, and “woman” is written as *not*. In her famous essay, “The Second Sex,” feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir writes, “Humanity is male, and man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself; she is not considered an autonomous being” (26). In other words, the very construct of “woman” is defined as “other than man” and as somehow lacking or lesser.<sup>1</sup> This makes representing genuine depictions of girls and women in literature difficult. How does one navigate creating a character who, before she is even written, is already marked by her “girl-ness”?

The media and images we consume leave impressions on us and affect how we interact with and act within our communities. It is important to consider what impressions are inscribed by depictions in literature and media of women and girls. In this essay, I will explore how the representation of a girl with fantastic powers undergoing girlhood in Netflix’s original TV show *Stranger Things* is able to subvert the paradox of the feminine subject and, by doing so, rethinks how girls can and should be portrayed in literature. We see this play out in the series’ protagonist Eleven’s character arc: by situating the character outside of the in-textual social order, portraying her moral development, and giving her the power to non-verbally express herself through fantastic abilities, *Stranger Things* is not only able to subvert expectations of “girl-ness”

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<sup>1</sup> De Beauvoir uses the binary terms “man” and “woman” to explore the consequences of traditional thinking of gender as a binary, not to imply that gender is an inherent binary.

that would otherwise mark Eleven's character, but also present and openly challenge limitations placed on girls within the patriarchal order.

### ***Stranger Things* and Boyhood**

In many ways, *Stranger Things* is a story about boyhood. The series takes place in the 80s in the small imaginary town of Hawkins, Indiana, a town where, seemingly, nothing ever happens. But then, 11-year-old William Byers mysteriously disappears on his bike-ride home from a friend's house, and the people of Hawkins are surprised to find danger lurking in the shadows of their sleepy town. Complete with interdimensional monsters, telekinetic girls, government conspiracy, and Eggos, *Stranger Things* takes notes from big-hit 80s films I watched as a girl: *Aliens*, *Stand by Me*, *ET*, and *The Goonies*, just to name a few. These were stories of young boys who, faced with danger and corruption present in the adult world, found the courage to expose the truth themselves. We are meant to root for these boys, and we like their stubbornness and their wit and their free-spirited nature. It is their innocence and their dedication to the truth that reveals the corruption and filth in our society. *Stranger Things* calls back to this American boyhood trope of the 80s, centering around three 11-year-old boys, Mike, Lucas, and Dustin, as they search for their missing friend, Will. Along the way, they learn they cannot trust their parents or their government and yet they push forward, determined to solve the mystery, defeat the bad men, and get back their friend.

Eleven is set in contrast to the boys. She is a young girl who was raised from infancy as a test subject in a secret military facility. Eleven is telekinetic, has unparalleled access to a dangerous other dimension termed the Upside Down and she is at the very center of the mystery which caused Will Byers to disappear into thin air. The narrative of girlhood in *Stranger Things* is hard to see at first; it is only visible if we consider Eleven's on-screen story from start to finish. Over the course of the first season of *Stranger Things*, we must consider the narrative space Eleven takes up, the evolution of her character, and her exclusive access to the fantastic elements in the story in order to understand how she represents a feminine subject in literature.

These elements of Eleven's construction offer the framework through which I will closely read several instances of transition in Eleven's character arc, in order to unpack how the writers of *Stranger Things* create a character that reimagines how women and girls are represented in literature.

### **The Feminine Subject**

In order to explore how Eleven represents a feminine subject, we must first understand the underlying critical theory. Joanna Elfving-Hwang discusses this philo-

sophical paradox of trying to represent the feminine subject in literature, or, in other words, why it is difficult to find representations of women in literature that challenge traditional constructions. Elfvig-Hwang explains that it is difficult to reimagine the feminine as equal to the masculine within the current symbolic order because the nature of the symbolic order does not allow this (166). The very idea of gender was constructed within a patriarchal culture and therefore the notions of “woman” or “girl” are defined by stereotype. This presents a problem when writers try to represent woman or girl characters because those characters, by the nature of them being “woman” and “girl” characters, are already marked by their femininity.

This is why some theorists—Elfvig-Hwang cites French philosopher Luce Irigaray—emphasize the need to reimage the feminine as independent and without reference to the masculine, because this would allow for a feminine subject. But as Elfvig-Hwang illustrates, “The main problem with reimagining the symbolic is that if the feminine is located outside a patriarchal symbolic order because it currently has no subjectivity within it, there would simply be no point of reference at all that would make the new representations in any way meaningful” (166). In other words, to reimage the feminine without reference to the masculine would necessitate trying to define what “feminine” means outside of the social construction of gender, which would render the term devoid of any meaning at all.

That being said, all is not without hope. Some writers have found ways to work around the paradox of the feminine subject. For instance, Sandra Lindow explores how a fantastical setting works as a platform for the young girls in Nnedi Okorafor’s stories to challenge the oppressive status quo. Lindow writes, “perhaps it is easier to analyze the damage traditional culture can do to girls when the story is set in a faraway and magical world” (47). In other words, fantastic settings offer their own truth to the story. By offering distance from, or a separate perspective on, the issue, the author is able to provide new insight on the problem. In the same way a metaphor might be the best way to clarify a concept, fantasy might be the best way to express the inexpressible about reality. Argentine author Julio Cortazar writes, “the fantastic breaks the crust of appearance... something grabs us by the shoulders to throw us outside ourselves. I have always known that the big surprises await us where we have learned to be surprised by nothing” (qtd. in Mukdsi). When the reader has accepted the ways in which reality has been subverted in order to make room for the fantastic, they are more likely to accept subversions of traditional culture in other areas, such as gender roles.

Lindow also explores how a genuine portrayal of girlhood itself can be an act of protest. I define girlhood as the common experience of being viewed and socialized as a girl within American society. Because the society is patriarchal, girls face particular challenges in their coming-of-age journeys. Lindow discusses how the works of

Okorafor navigate the healthy moral development of the girl protagonists over the courses of their hero journeys. Throughout her essay, Lindow outlines how Okorafor's girl protagonists are positioned to undergo moral development, or, in other words, to "overcome negative self-images, learn to channel their anger, establish alliances, gain agency, and begin to understand sexual intimacy" (47). In this way, a genuine narrative of girlhood will depict girl characters who will form relationships with their peers and will have a healthy sense of self-esteem. They will successfully navigate society's various images and develop an individual sense of identity while being constantly confronted by gender difference and expectation. Through the process of undergoing their hero's journey, the girls in Okorafor's stories learn to overcome emotional and interpersonal suffering as well as rise above the often prejudicial reality of their societies by affirming their self-esteem and self-worth.

*Stranger Things* calls upon the same techniques used by Okorafor to circumnavigate the paradox of the feminine subject. Not only is *Stranger Things* set in a fantastic setting, but Eleven herself is a fantastical character. Eleven has telekinetic abilities that allow her to move and control objects with her mind. The story subverts reality and calls upon elements of the fantastic to reveal and reject limitations places on girls in society. In addition, Eleven goes through significant moral development throughout the first season. Eleven is searching for self-affirmation and intimacy; she wishes more than anything to be affirmed in her identity and find a place of belonging. Throughout season one of *Stranger Things*, she develops a sense of self, she learns how to establish connections, and, most importantly, she experiences an affirmation of anger and strangeness that contributes to her gaining agency in her world.

### ***Stranger Things* and the Feminine Subject**

In order to represent true girlhood, Eleven must be a whole and complete subject, as all real girls are. *Stranger Things* goes a step further than other media, such as Nnedi Okorafor's fiction, in order to not only circumvent but *subvert* the paradox of the feminine subject. *Stranger Things* works to subvert this paradox by manipulating reality in the narrative realm. We can see the paradox at work in two ways in *Stranger Things*: through the characters that are marked by their girl-ness and who, no matter how well they are developed, still come across as stereotypes; and through Eleven, who escapes being marked by gender and is simply herself.

These "marked-girl" characters are present in the side narratives: there is Nancy, the older sister of Mike, who wears dresses and make-up and is searching for acceptance in the eyes of popular bad-boy, Steve. There is Barb, Nancy's overweight friend whom Nancy leaves behind to pursue Steve. And finally, there is Max, the skate-board

riding, video-game crushing tomboy who makes an appearance in the show's second season. The girly sister, the ugly girl, and the tomboy. These characters are all female characters who express physical and emotional strength and skill throughout the show, and yet cannot escape the boundaries of their roles as girl characters. In contrast, Eleven feels almost un-gendered. Eleven is still young enough at the beginning of the season to come across as androgynous. She has a shaved head and wears loose baggy tees and shorts in the first couple of episodes. She is mistaken as a young boy several times by strangers until she is given a blonde wig and borrows a former dress of Nancy's.

However, it is not only that Eleven simply does not fit our traditional norms of feminine appearance and dressing. She is different from the other girl characters in that she is the closest to achieving feminine subjectivity and, as such, the audience sees Eleven as Eleven first, rather than seeing her as a girl first. Since Eleven cannot truly be located outside of the symbolic order in reality, she is located outside of the *in-textual* symbolic order. Eleven was raised from birth inside a military facility and had no contact with the outside world. She does not escape until well into adolescence. Because she grew up isolated from society, she was never socialized within the *in-textual* symbolic order. Because she has not been socialized within the *in-textual* symbolic order, the audience is able to suspend their own socialized expectations of gender and recognize Eleven in her subjectivity. By situating Eleven outside of the *in-textual* symbolic order, *Stranger Things* is able to subvert expectations of "girl-ness" that would otherwise mark Eleven's character, presenting a character that is both a girl *and* a subject.

To summarize, Eleven's narrative engages with the techniques that Nnedi Okorafor employs: subverting reality through the fantastic, and portraying moral development in girlhood. However, in addition, *Stranger Things* subverts the paradox of the feminine subject through manipulation of the *in-textual* symbolic order. The result is a character and a story that mirrors girlhood: a constant confrontation and navigation with society's constructions and ideals while struggling to define oneself. In the remainder of this essay, I provide a close reading of several significant moments in Eleven's character arc that express this.

### **Eleven in *Stranger Things* Confronting the Symbolic Order**

Eleven is able to subvert the paradox of the feminine subject by being situated outside of the *in-textual* symbolic order. However, once Eleven escapes the facility and is introduced to society for the first time, she must go through a process of defining herself in relation to symbolic order as she confronts it, like a baby girl being socialized into the symbolic order for the first time. This allows for an honest exploration of society's construction of girlhood and femininity.

We see this most clearly when she is introduced to Mike, Dustin, and Lucas for the first time, and again when Eleven is introduced to Nancy by proxy when Eleven explores Nancy's room. She meets the boys for the first time at the beginning of the second episode, and immediately she recognizes herself as different and strange. At the beginning of the episode, Eleven has escaped the facility and those trying to capture her, and is found by Mike, Dustin, and Lucas, who are out in the woods looking for Will. She is soaked from running through the woods in the pouring rain, and when Eleven is brought back to Mike's house, he offers her a change of clothing. She immediately stands and starts to undress, to which the boys around her react strongly. She is startled until the boys explain the need for 'privacy' when undressing. 43 seconds into episode two and Eleven has already encountered her first gender construction: she is not a boy, like Mike, Dustin, and Lucas, and thus should not change clothes in front of them.

In episode three, Eleven sneaks upstairs from where she has been staying in Mike's basement and into Mike's older sister's room. The room itself is girly: it has pink and white striped wallpaper, white furniture—including an ornate wire framed bed with frilly pink and blue pillows—and posters of female models on the walls. Eleven is drawn to a delicate music box with a spinning ballerina inside, and to a pink cork picture-board covered in photos of Nancy. Eleven focuses on a photo of Nancy as a girl in a fairy princess costume, a photo of her in a white confirmation dress, and a photo of Nancy laughing with girlfriends. Here, Eleven is confronted by what she "should" be: a girl. Nancy is an expression of gender expectations of girls: Nancy wears dresses and has long hair and has girly things. Eleven recognizes herself as same yet different when compared to Nancy. From that moment in the story on, Eleven tries on traditional elements of girl-ness like a mask in order to try to define herself within society's social constructions of gender. For instance, in episode four, in order to sneak into the children's school without arousing suspicion, Eleven is dressed in an old pink dress of Nancy's and wears a blonde wig and makeup. When she sees herself in the mirror for the first time, she calls herself pretty, which is a call back to episode two when she had seen a photo of Nancy and said the same thing. Eleven continues to wear the dress and wig for a couple of episodes, and in doing so, expresses her struggle to define herself in relation to the symbolic order.

### **Affirmation of Self and 'The Strange'**

Eleven is driven by a need for affirmation and belonging. Because the boys are the only people she has ever known to care for her and show her the gift of friendship, Eleven's only goal throughout the show is to protect and preserve her friendships with Mike, Dustin and Lucas. The boys have a close friendship that centers around playing

the board game *Dungeons and Dragons*. They play the game as a team, called a “party,” and continue to refer to their group of friends as a party outside of the confines of the game. The introduction of Eleven into the party is the expression of her need for affirmation and belonging. She only knows that there is outside the party and being alone, or inside the party and being together.

In this way, she is initially characterized by her need for external affirmation of self, or her need to find belonging and acceptance among the party. Lindow quotes psychologist and feminist Carol Gilligan to explain this phenomenon of initially seeking outside affirmation: “girls’ moral development often begins in a state of silence where perceived morality depends on obedience and subjects lack awareness of their own rights to separate opinions and selves. They lack internal voices and rely on external authority for direction” (48). At the beginning of the show, Eleven not only lacks a sense of self; she lacks the internal agency to define herself and instead seeks external affirmation of her identity.

Mike and Lucas are most central to her development of external affirmation. Mike immediately accepts her. He takes her into his home and cares for her. When he finds out that she has been previously named for her code number, 11, Mike gives her the nickname El. The nickname works to humanize Eleven for Mike, but also serves as a gift from Mike to Eleven of the recognition and affirmation of her humanity. In contrast, Lucas continuously rejects Eleven’s strangeness. Lucas calls her names that stress her difference, such as “psycho,” “weirdo,” “freak,” “mad,” and so on. Lucas is a constant reminder to Eleven, but also to the show’s audience, that Eleven is strange. She is strange because of her access to the fantastic elements of the story. She is strange because she does not understand and does not conform to the norms of the in-textual social constructions. And she is strange to the boys because she is a girl.

It is not until Eleven is rejected by Mike in episode five that she experiences a true confrontation with “The Strange.” In episode five, Eleven lies to the boys in order to keep them safe, but in doing so betrays their trust. Lucas calls Eleven the “monster” that they have been looking for. At first Mike defends Eleven, even going so far as to fight Lucas to do so, but when Eleven uses her powers to break up the fight and accidentally telekinetically sends Lucas flying backward into a car, Mike condemns her in that moment by shouting “what is wrong with you!” twice. This rejection forces Eleven to confront her strangeness and wonder whether maybe she is a monster. The result is a sort of freeing of barriers. Since there are no rules of belonging anymore, Eleven is free to discard the wig, free to be angry, free to use her powers to fulfill her own needs. Eleven leaves the party voluntarily, proving to herself she can be on her own. She uses her powers recklessly in order to steal food, even going so far as to shatter the grocery store doors so she will not be stopped or bothered in any way. This is her first

self-affirmation with “The Strange.” It is also an expression of agency: for the first time, Eleven proves to herself that she has the power to take care of herself.

However, it is not until episodes six, that Eleven achieves true affirmation of self and The Strange. Toward the end of this episode, Mike and Dustin run into some bullies while out looking for Eleven. The bullies force Mike to step off the side of a cliff by holding a knife to Dustin’s neck and threatening to hurt him if Mike doesn’t do what they say. Mike jumps off the cliff but is miraculously saved as Eleven appears out of nowhere and lifts him back onto the cliff-side with her telekinetic powers. In an expression of agency and anger, Eleven proves that she can protect others as well as herself. She breaks the arm of one of the bullies and sends them both running with one powerful line: “Go!” Up until now, her self-affirmation of “The Strange” was coming from a place of fear and anger: she accepted that she was, in some ways, a monster. However, this affirmation of self is not complete until she can forgive her own strangeness. Mike helps her do this in episode six when she tells him, crying, that she is the monster, and he replies, “No, no El, you’re not the monster. You saved me, do you understand? You saved me.” In this way, he shows her that it is not her being strange that is morally definitive, but rather it is who she is and what she does. While Eleven is powerful and dark and strange, those things do not necessarily make her bad. Mike knows this and allows Eleven to finally be affirmed in her humanity and her identity, as well as her strangeness.

### **Eleven’s Strangeness as Feminist Resistance**

We’ve established that fantasy can be harnessed in order to subvert reality in fictional worlds and provide a platform for challenges to the symbolic order. *Stranger Things* utilizes the fantastic in the form of otherworldly dimensions, terrifying man-eating monsters, and telekinetic abilities. However, it is Eleven and solely Eleven who has access to these elements of the story. While other characters are simply either exploiters or victims of the fantastic elements, Eleven is the proprietor. She is the only one who has access to the dangerous other dimension due to her unique powers, and she is the one who ultimately opens the gate between the two dimensions allowing communication between them. This strangeness is unique to Eleven. Why did the writers give Eleven exclusive access to the fantastic elements in the story? Furthermore, why did they give her telekinetic powers? The story could have functioned without Eleven having telekinetic powers, so why include them?

An answer may be that Eleven’s access to “The Strange” is symbolic of societal pressures that exist for girls. Eleven’s abilities are a way of manifesting the social limiting of girls and women in our culture. According to Dr. Rocio Rodjer, a research fellow



at King's College London, "recent decades have witnessed feminist scholars reclaiming the legacy of writers such as [Ann] Radcliffe, and highlighting their impact on what is known as the Female Gothic, in which the ultimate source of terror is not the supernatural, but the lack of female agency, financial dependency, or the constant threat of sexual violence" (Mukdsi). In this way, Eleven's access to the fantastic elements in this story could represent the lack of agency girls feel in their lives within a patriarchal culture.

For instance, Eleven uses her powers for two main purposes: protection of herself and those she cares for, and for communication. Eleven grew up in the facility and presumably did not receive a formal education, and certainly experienced physical, emotional and psychological abuse. Both would have affected her ability to verbally communicate with those around her. She is depicted as soft-spoken and uses verbal communication very little. Instead, she uses her powers as her main mode of communicating. In episode four, we see Mike upset with Eleven because he thinks she lied to him about Will Byers' whereabouts. Mike yells at Eleven and accuses her of lying that Will was still alive and Eleven sits there with a radio in her hand. She does not defend herself. Instead, she uses her powers to transmit Will's voice over the radio to communicate that he is still alive and to prove to Mike that she was telling the truth. In this way, we see Eleven choosing to use her strangeness to communicate.

Throughout the show, she also uses her strangeness to communicate her emotions. When she saves Mike from the bullies in episode six and breaks a bully's arm, her power is an expression of anger toward the person hurting her friends. Similarly, in episode seven, she and the rest of the party are being chased on their bikes by the men and women of the facility who wish to take Eleven back. The kids are caught between cars at their back and a car speeding toward them. Eleven uses her powers to flip the car ahead of them, allowing them to escape to safety. Although Eleven's need to protect her friends is a strong motivator in this action, her use of telekinesis here is significant because it is a direct act of anger and disobedience toward Eleven's initial caretaker and "Father." He represents the whole of the facility and is in one of the cars that are chasing the children. Eleven's need to protect herself and her friends merges with her anger toward her "father" for abusing her and stealing her agency.

This moment in the story is the final and absolute moment of Eleven's journey towards affirmation and belonging. It is a violent show of self-affirmation in her own identity and power. It is this action that ultimately allows her to be inducted into the boys' party. Lucas finally accepts and affirms Eleven by saying that what she had done was "awesome" and apologizing for calling her names. It is both the self-affirmation and external affirmation of Eleven's anger and strangeness that is powerful.

In using her powers to both communicate messages that she cannot express verbally, and to communicate her emotional responses, Eleven manifests the lack

of voice and agency young girls experience in a patriarchal culture. Lindow cites the authors of the book *Women's Ways of Knowing* with the quote, "Conventional feminine goodness means being voiceless as well as selfless" (55). Women's voices are often silenced in a patriarchal culture, and they are certainly not allowed to be angry. However, such expression of voice and emotion is essential to a young woman's sense of self-esteem. In *School Girls: Young Women, Self-Esteem and the Confidence Gap*, Peggy Orenstein states:

Girls with healthy self-esteem have an appropriate sense of their potential, their competence, and their innate value as individuals. They feel a sense of entitlement: license to take up space in the world, a right to be heard and to express the full spectrum of human emotions. (qtd. in Lindow 59)

As we explored earlier, the affirmation of self-esteem is integral to a young girl's moral development, and in literature it can be a powerful form of protest against the oppressive order. If Eleven's powers are the physical manifestation of the ways in which girls are not given leeway to express themselves in society; they also challenge those same limitations. By allowing Eleven to express her emotions, especially her anger, so boldly and violently, *Stranger Things* reveals and rejects the oppressive patriarchal order.

### Conclusions

By the end of the first season, as a viewer I was incredibly invested in Eleven's character and was devastated when she sacrificed herself to save Mike, Dustin, and Lucas in the last episode. (She is revealed to not be dead in the second season.) It seems I am not the only one her character has touched, considering the young actress who plays Eleven, Millie Bobby Brown, has over 18 million followers on Instagram. In addition, Parrot Analytics determined *Stranger Things* to be the most popular streaming TV show in 2018; the show and its leading characters have clearly resonated with viewers all across the world. A piece of creative media that is that popular holds a significant amount of power with its viewers; the images and concepts that *Stranger Things* imparts have the ability to impress themselves upon millions of consumers worldwide. We as viewers must ask ourselves what impressions this piece of media leaves us with. Eleven is a character who, when compared with the other female characters in the series, is clearly set apart. The portrayal of Eleven as a girl undergoing moral development in girlhood returns depth to her character. Eleven's situation outside the in-textual social order allows her to be characterized outside of the social order and to therefore subvert the paradox of the feminine subject. Finally, Eleven's access to "The Strange"

presents and represents limitations on girls in society, and her character growth, specifically the affirmation of self and expression of anger, challenges those limitations. What any mainstream TV series chooses to show the viewer is significant, and the fact that *Stranger Things* is revealing and resisting traditional and oppressive depictions of women and girls is significant. *Stranger Things* reimagines how women and girls not only can, but should, be represented in literature and media.

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# AUBRIE COWELL

Aubrie Cowell is a senior English major with minors in creative writing and comparative literature. She is interested in Romanticism and the analysis of lyric poetry and uses these interests as inspiration for her own writing.

Mentor: **Prof. Michael Allan**

## TRACING THE POETIC ENERGY OF ECSTASY FROM PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY TO FRANK O'HARA

ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS FIRST STANZAS IN ALL OF ROMANTIC POETRY ENDS WITH THE INDELIBLE QUESTION: “What wild ecstasy?” (ln 10). John Keats’ “Ode on a Grecian Urn” asks, like many Romantic poems, what an encounter with ecstasy means while interrogating the poet’s ability establish a relationship with an ecstatic self, a self in a state of complicated transcendence. The word “ecstasy,” an abstract notion that comes from the Greek word *ekstasis*, refers to the state of being beside or rapt outside oneself. The Oxford English Dictionary advances this definition, describing ecstasy as “an exalted state of feeling which engrosses the mind to the exclusion of thought; rapture, transport. Now chiefly, intense or rapturous delight” (OED). Ecstasy is an experience in consciousness, typically prompted by nature or the surrounding world, to which the poet responds, allowing for a highly subjective and personal aesthetic occurrence. In the instant of ecstatic rapture, the self is simultaneously recognized outside and inside of the self, prompting the subject to exist at the same moment in the consciousness and in the surrounding universe.

The typical literary analyses of this relationship examine the term ecstasy, or *ekstasis*, with its oppositional term, *entasis*, which means “standing within oneself.” Yet the very state of stable self-recognition known in *entasis* evaporates in the moment of ecstasy, ultimately complicating the clear distinctions between subject and the apprehended object in an uncontrollable visitation of the self severed from the

self. Arising from this exploration of acknowledging the strange, defamiliarizing, and passionate power of ecstasy is the critic who questions: what are the traceable stakes of an event of poetic ecstasy? How does ecstasy aid in the constitution of the significance of a poetic event beyond Romanticism? How has ecstasy influenced the understanding of the role of the poet themselves and the constitution of what lyric poetry is capable of beyond the restraints of a literary era? In the course of this essay, like Keats in “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” I, too, question, what wild ecstasy?

In the poetry that arises from the Romantic era, from poets like John Keats, and, in this analysis, the poet Percy Shelley, the influence of an apprehension that produces ecstasy for the poet is significant to their linguistic and poetic ability to complicate and redefine the distinctions between subject and object in the course of a poetic act that attempts to call into being an ecstatic visitation. This is a poetic energy of ecstatic experience and contemplation established by the Romantic era that was not exhausted by its poets. Rather, the energy of ecstasy reemerges in the Modern era as a trace of the past and emanates from the poems of Frank O’Hara. Frank O’Hara was a confessional poet of the New York School in the 1950s whose poetry seemed marked with the trace of the identical complicated notions of subject defamiliarization experienced in the ecstasy of Romanticism as if the chaotic sense of self found in Frank O’Hara’s poetry emerges in Modernism as a trace of the residual energy of Romantic ecstasy. To specify the scope of this significant and vast trajectory for the purposes of this composition, the analysis will follow this trace in two poems in particular: Shelley’s version of ecstatic engagement, a subjectively revelatory aesthetic rapture found in nature, present in his poem “Song” from 1821 can be traced in Frank O’Hara’s 1957 poem “Mayakovsky” to reveal how Romanticism’s engagement with the poetics of subjective and aesthetic experiences has persisted. This continued engagement influences modes of thinking that have become majorly integral to poetry since Romanticism and gesture to how the poetic figuration of ecstasy through linguistic means suggests the very notion of sensational and conscious division from which the poet draws their authoritative voice and their ability to produce poetry.

The 1821 poem “Song” is Shelley’s enigmatic eight-stanza direct address to the Spirit of Delight, the elusive being of joy for whom the poet incessantly calls out, hoping to will it to return to his senses and consciousness. Shelley begs the Spirit directly, “Make once more my heart thy home,” explicitly asking the Spirit to physically join with him and inhabit the very fabric of his corporeal being (ln 48). The poem reveals the Spirit as the pure embodiment of ecstasy, ultimately

demonstrating the poet's complicated relationship to subjectivity in the experience of ecstatic rapture.

Beginning with the first moment of calling out to the elusive embodiment of ecstasy, Shelley beckons and declares in the opening line of "Song," "Rarely, rarely, comest thou, Spirit of Delight!" immediately establishing the use of the poetic figure of apostrophe (ln 1). Apostrophe is most commonly used in literary analysis to describe the mode of address through which the speaker calls out directly to an inanimate object, but apostrophe also can be extended to the type of address in which the poet speaks to something or someone who cannot respond. Apostrophe can be thoroughly traced throughout the tradition of Romantic literature, marking itself as an important feature of the lyricality of Romantic poetry. The poetically figured use of apostrophe seems to demonstrate the tradition as distinctly linguistic as well as formative of complicated subjective authority in its apprehensions of beauty, nature, and the sublime. Associating apostrophe with the lyric, John Stuart Mills writes of apostrophe that "the lyric poet normally pretends to be talking to himself or to someone else: a spirit of nature, a Muse, a personal friend, a lover, a god, a personified abstraction, or a natural object" (qtd. in Culler 137). In Shelley's "Song," the speaker does just this, and addresses the Spirit of Delight, ultimately calling out to all of Mills' potentialities for the lyric address apostrophe. According to Jonathan Culler, the lyrical effect of this mode of direct address "is a figure spontaneously adopted by passion, and it signifies, metonymically, the passion that caused it... Apostrophes indicate intense involvement in the situation described" (138). In this way, the lyrical effect of apostrophe mirrors the sensations of ecstasy which similarly invoke a passionate bursting forth of poetic self, showing how apostrophe becomes an avenue of aesthetic and linguistic representation of the elusive and powerful ecstatic visitation.

Using the figure of apostrophe, Shelley's "Song" demonstrates the ability of the poet to call into existence an ecstasy-inducing yet fleeting apprehension of an elusive being. This apostrophic address carries a tone of urgency in its desperation to be answered. Ecstatic visitation is not only linguistic possibility for the poem but an absolute necessity for producing a stable sense of his own subjectivity. According to Emile Benveniste's "Subjectivity in Language," the formation of subjectivity depends on a sort of apostrophe which recognizes the presence of an external "you" in relation to the speaker's "I" which affirms their subjectivity by contrast. Benveniste explains that "It is this condition of dialogue that is constitutive of person, for it implies that reciprocally 'I' becomes 'you' in the address of

the one who in his turn designates himself as I" (224-25). The notion of an I-thou relationship as affirmative of subjectivity is bound up in the figure of apostrophe which poetically calls out to a presence of a "thou" or a "you." Shelley's portrayal of the Spirit of Delight as an addressed subject receiving the pronoun "thou" or "you" in the poem, the poet affirms his own subjective authority in consciousness, for Benveniste argues "consciousness of the self is only possible if it experienced by contrast" (224). In connecting the notion of apostrophe to ecstasy, if ecstasy is the sensational recognition of the self outside of the self, then, in its apprehension, the poet is able to affirm his own agency as a subject. Culler offers support, revealing that the figure of apostrophe seemingly "internalizes what might have been thought external" because of this reciprocally affirmative linguistic relationship (146). Like the sensation of ecstasy, apostrophe produces an event of reciprocal acknowledgment of self-hood.

In her work *Persons and Things*, American literary critic and theorist Barbara Johnson describes generally describes this type of poetic event: "Addressing something reveals the nature of the subject, not of the object, but the object is nevertheless affected, drawn into the speech event with the poet. The poet may simply be making that being-with happen" (9). Recognizing the Spirit's existence as outside of himself, and immediately calling out to it to create make a sense of "being with" happen, Shelley establishes an I-thou relationship to an indefinable presence of delight, giving the poet the ability to linguistically harness the ecstatic effect by using the pronoun "thou" which carries the weight of its own subjectivity while affirming his own agency as positing himself as a subject. This relationship to the Spirit continues as Shelley asks, "Wherefore thou hast left me now?" (ln 3). This apostrophic address directed toward the Spirit of Delight reveals the nature of his subjectivity, revealing himself as if confounded by his own defamiliarization in his relationship to an undefinable quality of nature. Throughout the poem, the poet uses apostrophic address, turning to the outside world to symbolize and explore the inner-workings of his consciousness and enchanting his work to enter the realm of Romantic ecstatic rapture which uncontrollably prompts self-discovery through a rare apprehension in a moment of a lack of comprehension. This singular instance of defamiliarizing self-completeness in a moment of self-division is the arrest and a temporal anomaly of ecstasy precipitated by lyrical Romanticism and demonstrated through the literary figure of apostrophe in Shelley's "Song."

Demonstrating how ecstasy is a moment of completeness and bereftness at the same time, Johnson explains, "The difference between self and other becomes

very murky if one comes to know oneself only when what appears to be another is revealed to be the self" (48). This assertion supports the notion that, through an experience with ecstasy, an event by which the subject recognizes himself as being outside of himself, he can no longer have clear distinctions of subjectivity, for what distinguishes him or her as an individual, a differentiation to other surrounding objects, becomes a complicated knot whereby the clear boundaries between subject and object are eliminated. This melting of subject-object distinction mirrors the defamiliarizing and dissociating, yet passion-inducing, quality of ecstasy explored in "Song."

The linguistic reflection of an engagement with ecstasy is demonstrated in an analysis of other poetic figures present in the poem, showing how the literary conventions do not serve poetic coherence only but are employed to reflect an engagement with ecstasy in the mind as well as in the surrounding world. The rhyme scheme of the poem utilizes an evolving ABAB pattern and then forces each stanza to end in a rhyming couplet. This rhyming couplet adds to the lyricism of the poem, but also pushes the boundaries of reader expectations. The poem offers a pattern to follow and, just as the reader thinks they see an alternating pattern develop, it switches to rhyming two end words in a row. This structure for the rhyme scheme prompts the reader to understand that this poem is not about fulfilling conventional poetic expectations but rather for showing how poetic conventions can be subverted to reveal the strange and uncontrollable connections to sensations of ecstasy which similarly fail to meet reader expectations in the poem.

The defamiliarizing recognition the Spirit of Delight as the embodiment of an ecstatic presence is further expressed in the first two lines of the third stanza, which depict a strange and striking natural image in the form of a simile. Addressing the Spirit of Delight directly, Shelley writes, "As a lizard with the shade/ Of a trembling leaf,/ Thou with sorrow art dismayed" (ln 13-15). In these lines, the poet calls into existence the presence of the Spirit in a purely linguistic form which acts as a second-order signifier of meaning: the simile. Similes are most commonly meant to clarify via comparison, but this simile seems to defamiliarize and make the Spirit seem more elusive, foreign and unattainable. This is the only simile in the poem, and it evokes an exotic scene, showing an unfamiliar animal depicted under wavering darkness. The alien nature of this lizard is compelling, for it is the first physical form that the Spirit manifests as in the poem, and it's strange and distant. In addressing the Spirit using a simile, the linguistic formation emulates the defamiliarized sensation of ecstatic visitation.



Analyzing the strangeness of this metonymic comparison reveals that the simile's dependent clause unconventionally precedes the independent clause, which includes the subject that the dependent clause is referring to, allowing for momentary defamiliarization with what the language is expressing, adding to the dissociative quality of this line. The notion of the Spirit's elusiveness and ability to defamiliarize are also at play in the portrayal of light in this simile. Shelley uses the word "trembling" to show that the shade under the leaf that disguises the lizard is not constant, but rather seems to shake with intermittent gleams of light. The unstable manner in which lightness and darkness are behaving here reveals how the lizard (the Spirit) experiences these very instantaneous bursts of being revealed, but it is quickly covered again by the leaf's shade. It's the strange and dissociated sensation of the apprehensions of language being familiar and unfamiliar, being called into being as both simultaneously, that reflects the dissociation of self that occurs upon an encounter with ecstasy, when the overwhelming sensation of a recognition of self outside of the self is poetically thrust upon the poet.

By linguistically and poetically calling the Spirit of Delight into existence with a relationship of sentience and mutual subjectivity in comparison to the speaker, the poet engages with his ecstatic self. Further calling the Spirit into being, Shelley examines how the Spirit has the ability to love and leave, revealing that the elusive Spirit of Delight loves certain things, in particular, the things the speaker loves too. He writes, "I love all that thou lovest" (ln 25). In this expression, the speaker appears to be a student of the Spirit. He studies and pays attention to the things the Spirit seems to love so that he may love them, too. The poet follows the movements of the Spirit's affections perhaps in order to get closer to the elusive entity, or perhaps, to try and understand how it behaves and why. In this poem, the Spirit is something to be illuminated and uncovered, and using nature, the poet can explore how one might engage with the Spirit. This engagement with the Spirit seems it cannot happen directly, but rather by encountering and seeking out the elements of the outside world that the Spirit seems to love, for if it loves these things, it dwells near them. This is related to ecstasy and lyrical subject formation, which actually asserts the poet's own authority to be a subject and call out to another thing: "If they are subjects, they seek, like all subjects, to transcend a purely material condition, they aspire transcendence. If earth can be addressed and has desires, it wants to be invisible, to be spirit; it seeks rearing in us" (Culler 146). The Spirit of Delight is not just a subject to which the poet desires to respond, but an entity that, in his calling out to it, is given the ability to respond, and therefore

has a subjective perspective from which to respond, reflecting the reciprocal nature of subject acknowledgment present in the experience of an ecstatic event.

The vivid imagery contained in Shelley's poem, particularly in the fifth stanza, explicitly presents the poet's subjective interaction with nature, ultimately blurring the distinctions between his own subjectivity and the vivacious details of being alive in the natural world. Using sensory appeals to vision and temperature, Shelley portrays a seamless changing in the sense of time of year and time of day. The poet strangely refers to an individual place where all of these incongruent and surprising parts of nature can be experienced together. In the last two lines of the fifth stanza, he writes "Autumn evening, and the morn/ When the golden mists are born" (ln 29-30). This beautiful image refers to the product of the sum of nature plus time and consciousness or subjectivity. The interaction with this momentary completeness found in nature serves the poet for the purpose of self-discovery and aesthetic subject formation that reflects the same qualities of ecstatic rapture. Time is portrayed as an entity which is constant but produces momentary effects, influences that are "born" in certain times of the day and not others. The creation of a subjective engagement with nature is born in the consciousness through linguistic means and gestures to the temporary and fleeting nature of the Spirit's effects that can only be sought out by interacting with nature. In this way, the ecstatic embodiment of the Spirit is a necessity the poet's sensibility, for he recognizes the Spirit's ability in affirming subjectivity in evoking it. And finally, Shelley explicitly asks the Spirit of Delight, "Between me and thee/what difference?", solidifying his ecstatic relationship to the Spirit (ln 40-41). Chad Wellmon questions this "desired unity, this erasure of distinction as spectral or between worlds." He asks "what is this sensibility, this spectral sense that 'mixes' body and soul and various forms of sensual experience? What sensibility can account for this impossible experience of unity?" (459). My analysis of Shelley's "Song" answers Wellmon with the radiance of a subjective authority: this sensibility is ecstasy.

By analyzing Shelley's particular engagement with ecstasy present in "Song," the subjective ecstatic experience of the linguistic modes of lyric poetry can be traced in the expression of a modern poem written in 1957: Frank O'Hara's "Mayakovsky." Modernism, which grapples with the chaos of everyday life and the divisions of self apprehended everywhere, brought on by the rapid pacing of newness and change, seems it couldn't be more different than the languid contemplations of natural beauty found in Romanticism. Yet the two eras are connected significantly through the poetic energy of ecstasy that characterizes poetic explorations of sub-

jective positionality in the world, offering a link between the two eras by tracing ecstatic engagement in poetry. Frank O'Hara's "Mayakovsky" is a stunning example of a Modern ecstatic engagement, mirroring Shelley's apostrophic approach in "Song" to similarly call out to an embodiment of ecstasy. The four-section, free verse poem explores O'Hara's subjective positionality of self in the world and its connection to stable identity through poetic figurations ecstatic engagement. O'Hara contemplates the personal and poetic self through the complex approach of complicating the relationship between the subject and the object in the poem. The poet suggests that through his lyrical apostrophic address, he is perhaps able to understand himself once more, and in this understanding, he can not only feel the lyrical unification with his own personality but also be able to achieve and reproduce this kind of ecstatic arrest that a poet must for others.

In the beginning, the poem seems to want to address Vladimir Mayakovsky, a renowned Russian poet whom O'Hara admired and was deeply influenced, for his name is the title of the poem, yet the speaker is in a position of chaotic uncertainty, and he addresses his absent mother in the first stanza of the poem. The speaker begs:

Mother, mother  
who am I? if he  
will just come back once  
and kiss me on the face  
his coarse hair brush  
my temple, it's throbbing!  
then I can put on my clothes  
I guess, and walk the streets. (ln 2-9)

The speaker suggests that his true self is currently somewhere outside and away from his present consciousness as if a unification with the self can only occur from recognizing its position outside of the self. Acknowledging the presence of his true self is in its best position when he exists outside of himself and close enough to kiss, O'Hare begins his exploration of ecstatic identity. The idea of being outside of oneself embedded in the word "ecstasy" is the quality of lyricism that possesses and enchants uncontrollably, creating a world of its own exquisite sublimity. This is what the poem achieves in its unstable address and chaotic sense of poetic identity. Barbara Johnson claims the effect of apostrophe is "the poetic experience, and not the condition for it," and further notes that the "problem of

poetic authority does not depend on what the poet says but on his capacity to call" (8-9). The speaker, who is Frank O'Hara himself, exists in a plane of dissociated uncertainty as he uses the mode of apostrophe to beg for his ecstatic self to return to himself. Like in Shelley's "Song," O'Hara employs an urgent and desperate tone as if begging for the ecstasy of lyrical arrest brought on by his own perceptions and sensations, but he is stuck not feeling what he craves. He asks with desperation, "who am I?" (ln 4). The speaker's recognition of his own divisions of consciousness in this poem suggest that the true ecstatic self with which O'Hara wishes to unite is just as elusive and uncontrollable as the visitation of Shelley's Spirit of Delight, celebrating a more whole and beautiful way of perceiving and engaging with the subjective self and the surrounding world, and it is this notion the O'Hara most values in "Mayakovsky."

In the first stanza, the poem is immediately immersive in its desperation while simultaneously defamiliarizing the reader from the sensations that are their own, ultimately producing in them the same erratic attempt at unification with the ecstatic self that the poet most desires. O'Hara writes of his attempt to unify with ecstasy and recounts the failure, "I embrace a cloud,/but when I soared/it rained" (ln 26-28). The imagery in these lines is of a physical joining of the poet with the natural world that exists outside of him. In fact, much of the poem is characterized by diction and imagery of nature even from the poet's seemingly urban setting. O'Hara writes of walking "the streets" (ln 10), the "window ledge" (ln 51) and "tracks" (ln 52) positioning himself in a city with apartments that have railing below, yet the setting still provides aianthuses to step out onto, and clouds to embrace. The poet describes another moment of trying to find himself through a unification with the natural world: "I leap into the leaves, green like the sea" (ln 53). O'Hara uses a vibrant and sensual connection with the surrounding natural environment to find himself once more. Although he is not calling out apostrophically to the elements of nature themselves, as Shelley does in "Song," the poet demonstrates his search for a physical connection to the natural world, and it is the natural images and words which provoke his unification with ecstatic identity. This is a highly Romantic sentiment who poets such as Blake, Keats, and Shelley utilized to break free from poetic tradition, inject the sublime into poetry, and contemplate the rare and enchanting subjective perspective of the poet who can engage with the world with attention to the exquisite lyricism of life, any life which he has the power to pose.

“Mayakovsky” is told from a chaotic perspective, both structurally and thematically, which creates an instability in the reader reminiscent of the uncertainty the subject senses in the experience of ecstasy. The qualities of desperation, immersion, and defamiliarization evoke an ambiguous sensation of the self within the reader. This kind of nuance is characteristic of the lyric ecstasy that Frank O’Hara produces with a chaotic yet enchanting poem of this caliber. The poet uses numbered stanza breaks to create differing sections that are not easily linked in the reader’s mind and seem to add to the divisions of the self and divisions of the addressees in the poem. Each of the four sections appear structurally like a unique poem, disregarding the poetic structure and appearance of the stanzas that came before it. Each section also reads like it could be its own poem, revealing the speaker’s layering of the self in attempt to find the true self, as if he has started all of the separate poems in attempt to find the true self but none were moving toward a sensation of lyricism, so he moved onto the next endeavor. The fourth section of “Mayakovsky” gets the closest to achieving a successful lyrical unification with the ecstatic self. The final section offers a poetic self-discovery regarding the ecstatic identity of the speaker. O’Hara reaches the realization that it is necessary for him to be “quietly waiting for/the catastrophe of [his] personality/to seem beautiful again,/and interesting and modern” (O’Hara ln 37-40). In this part of the poem, the surrounding world is described as “skies of laughter/ always diminishing, less funny/ not just darker, not just grey,” meaning that the poet has not yet erupted into the lyrical ecstasy he craves when he unifies with his true self (ln 43-45). In the language of his description of the outside world, O’Hara unifies the sky, an element of nature, with a purely auratic human expression: laughter, further blurring the distinction between the characteristics of a subject by associating the generally supposed human qualities of sentience with the surrounding world of nature which is generally supposed to have objective characteristics of inanimation.

While the poem ends still bereft of a visitation from the ecstatic self, O’Hara concludes that if he thinks and perceives with attention to calling into existence and engaging with another poet’s ecstatic identity, namely Mayakovsky, regarding the surrounding world, perhaps he will find his true self again and be able to feel and produce ecstasy in that process. He writes:

It may be the coldest day of  
the year, what does he think of  
that? I mean, what do I? And if I do,  
perhaps I am myself again. (ln 46-49)

O'Hara's expression does not use apostrophe explicitly but rather ponders the poet's ability to apostrophize in order to become a subject once more. These lines seem to recognize the very argument which Culler offers in "Apostrophe":

To apostrophize is to will a state of affairs, to attempt to call into being by asking inanimate objects to bend themselves to your desire. In these terms the function of apostrophe would be to make the objects of the universe potentially responsive forces... The apostrophizing poet identifies his universe as a world of sentient forces. (Culler 139)

The speaker does not address Mayakovsky or ask what he thinks of "the coldest day of/the year," but rather asks himself, ultimately transforming the position of the "I" into a "thou" while still maintaining the pronoun "I." This creates a relationship of reciprocity whereby recognizing the existence of a sentient subject affirms and calls into being the existence and subjective authority of the other. By questioning his address of Mayakovsky, pondering the potentiality of calling him into existence, and evoking the notion of entering into a discourse of an I-thou relationship to him, the poet recognizes he is able to affirm his own subjectivity. This sentiment is encapsulated in the final line of the poem: "And if I do,/perhaps I am myself again" (ln 49). The verb "do," as ambiguous as it may seem, refers to the act of addressing and recognizes its power in creating an event, an occurrence of self-discovery, and a revelation of poetic authority whereby the poet is able to be revealed to himself through the practice of poetry. Like Jonathan Culler, O'Hara recognizes the power of apostrophe and shows how the figure does something by creating an event of subject formation. O'Hara's "Mayakovsky" demonstrates the stakes of apostrophe that Culler explores in his article and ultimately offers support for the revelations established in Culler's work to show how the speaker might once again find his own poetic authority through apostrophe and become himself once more.

O'Hara's work ultimately discovers that the visitation of feeling and production of ecstasy cannot be forced or compelled, or even physically evoked, but it can be obtained through the traces of it offered in the records of the amazing poets before us who experienced the privilege of this ecstatic unification and wrote it down for all to access when they are bereft of lyricism. O'Hara ends the poem asking these specific questions to gesture to the poet's ability to join the reader with their missing parts so that for an instant of ecstasy, they might feel that wholeness O'Hara calls out for in this poem. Although he doesn't find his lyric identity,

O'Hara produces a sensation of lyricism through his endeavor to find it in himself, for the reader is left with a sensation of ambiguous and uncanny realization that through poetry, there is unlimited access to ecstasy, and in that we are freed from our own inability to find our true selves.

O'Hara's poem "Mayakovsky" and Shelley's "Song" both examine and interrogate the lyrical effect through the mode of apostrophe in order to arrive at a conclusion about the self and the lack of control and completeness the subjective self endures as one who recognizes ecstasy and lusts after it only to be left in a state of momentary subjective awe about the visitation. Interestingly, it is in these moments of identifying the self outside of the self that the poet is revealed to himself, and it is in this joining of the self and the natural world that the poet is able to feel complete. In this context, the impositions of a clear distinction between man and nature evaporate. They fall away the instant of the ecstatic visitation which causes a lyrical event of subject formation to occur in the poem., for Chad Wellmon in his exploration of these distinctions questions, "if nature determines man and man forms himself as a natural being, thereby forming nature, how can [we] account for these processes of mutual formation that always fold back upon themselves? How can Romanticism account for both the distinctions and non-distinctions of man and nature?" (455). The tracing of ecstatic energy presented in my analysis responds to Wellmon inquiry that it is ecstasy which accounts for these processes.

The tracing of the poet's engagement with ecstasy in poetry has the effects on literature that a cultural or historical movement should, yet it is poetry doing this work. The effects of this ecstatic Romanticism on literature don't exclusively pertain to the values of a chronological historical movement, rather its effects on literature have persisted today, stemming from the specifically Romantic values of engaging with the world with attention to ecstasy to create an authority of subjective poetic experience. In tracing the poet's engagement with ecstasy from the era of Shelley's Romanticism to O'Hara's modern American poem "Mayakovsky," a compelling notion arises of ecstatic and apostrophic poetic history as not chronological, but rather aesthetic in nature, as a physical trace one is able to see flashing up in poetry. In his *Theses on the Concepts of History*, Walter Benjamin demonstrates how "The past can be seized as an image that flashes up at the moment of its recognizability" (Benjamin 390). This is the notion of history that reflects the traceable qualities of ecstasy, perpetuating the traceable link between the very deconstruction of linguistic subjectivity and the affirmation of subjective authority that occurs simultaneously in the moment of ecstasy.

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# GAROD DRUMM

Garod Drumm is an English and cinema studies major in his third year at the University of Oregon. He has a special interest in magical realism and fantasy, and because of this he selected a novel by award-winning author Neil Gaiman to examine for this year's theme, "Trace."

Mentor: **Dr. Anna Kovalchuk**

## DIVINE BLOODLINES: CONNECTIONS TO THE ANCIENT PAST IN *ANANSI BOYS*

IN HIS 2005 FANTASY NOVEL *ANANSI BOYS*, author Neil Gaiman explores how traces of the past can affect a person's life. *Anansi Boys* is the story of two brothers, Fat Charlie and Spider, who are brought together by the death of their father. Fat Charlie didn't even know Spider existed, but the death of their father Anansi—who, unbeknownst to Fat Charlie, was actually an ancient magical god—brings the two brothers together. One of the novel's primary interests is an exploration of how the two brothers differ from each other. Spider has a much stronger connection to their family's past than Fat Charlie does, as Spider possesses all the ancient godlike powers inherited from their father. Fat Charlie, meanwhile, is an everyday mortal with no inherited godliness, and so possesses much less connection to the generations that came before him. Through contrasting these two characters, Gaiman suggests in *Anansi Boys* that the traces of one's past can lead to a much more secure and fully-realized future.

First, a bit of backstory. When Charlie was a boy, his father had a friend called Mrs. Dunwiddy, who was also magical. One day Charlie annoyed her by smashing a mirror ball in her garden. So, to try and "fix" Charlie's wicked ways,

Mrs. Dunwiddy performed a spell to pull “All the tricksiness, all the wickedness, [and] all the devilry” out of Charlie (Gaiman 301). But the spell went awry, and instead of just pulling certain traits from Charlie, she pulled a whole other *being* from him who possessed all these traits. The Charlie that remained—the now-normal Charlie, lacking in “tricksiness” and other such traits—grew up to become the main character, Fat Charlie. Meanwhile, the “tricksy” version of Charlie that Mrs. Dunwiddy pulled out of the original Charlie grew up to be Spider, who possesses all the charm, godliness, and magic inherited from Charlie’s father. When viewed through this lens, one can see how Mrs. Dunwiddy essentially pulled the traces of Charlie’s past out of him, and those traces manifested as Spider. Now, left with no remnant of the past inside him, Charlie is left to deal with his life as a mere mortal, unrooted from his family history and the powers he once possessed. Spider has the luxury of living a life rooted in the past, since he inherited his godlike powers, while Fat Charlie must face with the world on his own.

The boys’ father, Anansi, is known to be a trickster god, an archetype which scholar Paul Radin says “represents not only the undifferentiated and distant past, but likewise the undifferentiated present within every individual” (qtd. in Czarnowsky 40). The trickster simultaneously represents both the past and present, and one can even think of Charlie and Spider as being split along this same axis: Spider possesses all the older, ancient, godlier traits of Anansi, while Charlie represents a modern mortality. Gaiman’s use of a trickster god as the father figure in this story allows an exploration of the past and present, and how one’s connections (or lack thereof) to these times can affect one’s life. The trickster god has ties in both the past in the present. Gaiman furthers the potential held by the trickster figure by splitting this figure into two—Fat Charlie, who is connected to the present, and Spider, who is connected to the past—to compare and contrast these connections to different temporal spheres.

The story then begins many years after Mrs. Dunwiddy split Charlie in two, and the stark contrast between these two “brothers” (for they are referred to as “brothers” for much of the story, despite actually being two halves of the same original person) becomes apparent right from their first encounter with one another. After Fat Charlie and Spider finally meet, Fat Charlie asks Spider why he never visited prior to their father’s death, or why he never at least let Fat Charlie know that he existed. Spider then launches into a story about all the planning he put into their first meeting, so that when the time came, it would be perfect. In describing his planning of the perfect meeting, Spider says, “I knew that the meeting of two brothers, well, it’s the subject of epics, isn’t it?” (Gaiman 85). Here, Spider’s thought

process is reflective of his general demeanor—godlike, epic—and it draws further contrast between the worldviews of Spider and Fat Charlie. Fat Charlie is merely concerned, as a normal person would be, as to why Spider had never visited his own brother, but Spider wanted to wait and make sure their meeting was worthy of being “the subject of epics.” Spider had also decided he should introduce himself to Fat Charlie in verse at their first meeting. Spider says: “It had to be something dark, something powerful, rhythmic, epic. And then I had it. The perfect first line: *Blood calls to blood like sirens in the night*” (86). The first line of verse Spider came up with is, itself, evocative of epic imagery, and suggests a grand scope. He paints the entire ordeal as an event that would rattle history. “*Blood calls to blood*” suggests an extension of significance beyond just two brothers meeting up. To Spider, it’s not as simple as just two people grabbing coffee, but rather is a grand event in which likewise bloodlines converge and beckon to each other as if by some will of the universe itself.

Spider is in touch with his family’s history, and possesses the magical energy that his father passed onto him. The traces of the past that Spider possesses directly influence his personality and the way he interacts with the world: his godly family history, manifested in him, causes him to have a godlike view on the world. Having a strong connection to the past directly influences his life and who he is as a person, and this notion of a direct connection between personality and one’s family history is supported by empirical data. Psychological studies, such as those performed by professor Sebastiano Costa and his coworkers, suggest that there is a direct link between who a person is and their connection to those who have come before them. One study by Costa “estimates heritability of personality at approximately 50%, and several studies have shown that personality development takes place partly due to environmental influences and partly from hereditary aspects, facilitating transmission from one generation to another” (106). This study proves that heredity traits are a significant factor in the forming of one’s personality. It evokes the ages-old “nature versus nurture” argument, and suggests that they both contribute to the creation of a person’s character. The notion that “heredity aspects” hold dominion over the formation of a person’s character is a suggestion that Neil Gaiman seems to align himself with in *Anansi Boys*, as he attributes Spider’s bravado and dreamlike lifestyle to the magical, godlike abilities and persona that Spider inherited from his father.

This insight into heredity traits and their influence over personality and lifestyle acts as a foundation for further exploration of the above passage, in which Spider describes to Charlie how he wanted their first meeting to go. These inher-

ited godlike aspects of Spider's character shine a light on the influence of his father over how he operates in his daily life. In fact, this passage is one of the most significant passages of *Anansi Boys* in its portrayal of the traces of their father present in both Fat Charlie and Spider, and how these traces contrast each other. They are both their father's son, but through Mrs. Dunwiddy's act of tearing them into two people, they now each possess very different inherited traits from their father. Traces of their bloodline manifest differently in each of them. Spider, for example, lives as if each move he makes will be written and sung about for centuries to come, which makes sense, as the traces of their father present in Spider are the godlike traces. Spider's perspective on the world and on his life is a direct reaction to the traits he inherited from his father. Spider describes his line "*Blood calls to blood like sirens in the night*" by saying "It says so much. I knew I'd be able to get everything in there—people dying in alleys, sweat and nightmares, the power of free spirits uncrushable" (Gaiman 86). Everything is grand, and symbolic, and powerful to Spider. Every event in his life seems to play out for him like an ancient Greek epic, full of heroes and gods and magic and allegory. He inherited godlike blood, and through these traces of his father, formed a life entirely different from that of Fat Charlie.

Fat Charlie, meanwhile, was left without his father's godliness. It seems Fat Charlie rather inherited the traits that *would* shine through in his father, were it not for his father's godlike charm and magic covering up anything un-godlike. For example, the beginning of the book describes the father's death. He is singing at a karaoke bar, wooing the entire audience with his magical charm, when suddenly he clutches his chest. As soon as this heart attack begins, his godlike persona seems to drop, as he can focus only on the pain in his chest. It is in this raw moment—his dying moment—in which we see a glimpse at the barer, more mortal aspects of Fat Charlie's father. He begins to fall to the ground, still clutching his chest, and stumbles into an awkward death:

...with his final gesture, as he fell, [he] reached out and grasped at something, which turned out to be the blonde tourist's tube top, so that at first some people thought he had made a lust-driven leap from the stage with the sole purpose of exposing the bosom in question, because there she was, screaming, with her breasts staring at the room, while the music for "I Am What I Am" kept playing, only now without anyone singing. (23)

The death of Fat Charlie's father is a painfully awkward scene. It's painfully mortal, and uncomfortable, and almost laughable. It lacks all the swagger he ordi-

narily possessed in his life. Even a god has the capacity for an embarrassing situation, such as exposing a women's breasts in his moment of death. Mere moments before, Anansi had been wooing the entire audience with his singing, and Gaiman describes the scene in the same way he describes many scenes in which a godlike character such as Anansi or Spider uses their powers: he writes as if their magic is effortless. For example, Gaiman describes the beginning of the karaoke scene just a few minutes before Anansi has a heart attack as such: "He was older than [the blonde tourists], much, much older, but he was charm itself, like something from a bygone age when fine manners and courtesy gestures were worth something. The barman relaxed. With someone like this in the bar, it was going to be a good evening" (2). The way Gaiman crafts the scene suggests a more natural execution of magic than one might expect—there are no wands, or flashing lights, or any grand spectacle. Rather, he writes as if the world naturally bends to the benefit of these gods, as Anansi effortlessly puts everyone's minds at ease. Gaiman's description of the barman relaxing because "it was going to be a good evening" with someone like Anansi in the bar stands out because the barman had never met Anansi before, and so didn't actually know his nature. Yet, due to Anansi's charm, the universe around him—including the mind of the barman (as well as the minds of the blonde tourists)—seems to breathe a sigh of relief in his presence, as if nothing can ever go wrong when he's around. With a character who exudes magic and charm so effortlessly, the death scene becomes all that more valuable, as it is a rare glimpse into who Anansi is behind the magic—who he would be if he didn't charm his way through the world. This charmless, awkward, raw side of Anansi is the side reflected in Fat Charlie.

Right from Gaiman's first introduction of Fat Charlie, he makes it clear that Charlie is a man defined by embarrassment. He likes to fly below the radar, live a normal life, and avoid any uncomfortable situations. He actually moved to a different continent from his father because he found his father and his bravado too embarrassing to be around. And now, in the raw scene of his death, we get a glimpse of just how awkward Fat Charlie's father can be, and it is this facet of his father that Fat Charlie inherits. The death scene shows Anansi unrooted from the magical charm he's employed all his life—in that moment, he is woefully trapped in the present, in the moment of his death, and no amount of charm can save him. The death scene is Gaiman's most honest portrayal of how painful it is to live solely in the present, with all connections to one's past severed, and Fat Charlie embodies the persona his father puts forth in this scene.

One can also look to studies of acculturation for insight on how one's connection to the past can influence their life in the present. Arzu Rana-Deuba and

Colleen Ward evaluate the effects of acculturation—or, what it's like to try and assimilate into a new culture—on a person's life. They write: “For psychological well-being, identification with culture of origin is the most salient factor and is associated with a decrease in depressive symptoms” (Ward 435). This claim, similar to the earlier claim from Costa's psychological studies, asserts a link between emotional stability and one's ancestral identity—one's parent culture can have a significant influence on who they are, and how they affect (and are affected *by*) the world around them. Through this essay, Rana-Deuba and Ward explore this link to the effect of discovering a *positive* correlation between one's relationship with their parent culture, and their own mindset. Whereas Costa's research suggests that a connection exists between hereditary traits and personality, the research done by Ward and Rana-Deuba goes a step further to suggest a positive correlation exists between one's personality and having a healthy relationship with the past. The claim that a healthy relationship with one's parent culture benefits emotional wellbeing also suggests that the opposite is true—an unhealthy relationship (or no relationship at all) with one's parent culture would allow one's emotional wellbeing to wither. This sense of being unrooted from one's family history alters the way one exists within their world, and hinders a positive emotional status or a sense of self, as the self has nothing to root itself in—with no connection to their culture of origin, one has no history upon which to build the foundation of who they are within their society. This relationship between mental health and culture of origin can be thought of as a parallel to the situation of Fat Charlie and Spider explored in *Anansi Boys*.

In this allegory, Anansi serves as a culture of origin, and Fat Charlie and Spider are examples of two people who have entirely different relationships with this culture of origin. Spider is the one with the thicker ties to his family—he is as godlike as his father, and acts much the same way as Anansi did in his life. Gaiman's *Anansi Boys* demonstrates that this unbroken connection to his family roots allows for Spider to lead a much better life than Fat Charlie. For example, shortly after Fat Charlie and Spider first meet, Spider suggests they go out for a night on the town together. One of their stops is an old wine bar, and while there, Spider uses his magical charm to persuade the bartender to give him a very special bottle of wine. Spider describes it as “Funeral wine, the kind you drink for gods. They haven't made it for a long time. It's seasoned with bitter aloes and rosemary, and with the tears of brokenhearted virgins” (Gaiman 84). This is clearly not a bottle of wine that any ordinary being would have access to; Spider even notes it as having celestial connections: “the kind you drink for gods.” Additionally, one

would not expect any wine in the real world to be seasoned with the “tears of brokenhearted virgins.” Gaiman describes how Spider, in a sense, spoke the special wine into existence when Fat Charlie asks “And they sell it in a Fleet Street wine bar?”, and Spider responds: “These old places have the good stuff, if you ask for it...Or maybe I just think they do” (84). Merely *thinking* that the bar would have this particular wine was enough to make the wine actually exist within the bar, so that Spider and Charlie could drink it. This instance is exemplary of much of the way Spider interacts with the world: he gets what he wants, when he wants, and it’s all due to his magical, godlike abilities, the very abilities he inherited from his father, who represents a culture of origin. Spider’s connection to this culture of origin is so strong that the culture essentially flows *through* him, in the form of inherited magical ability. Spider continues the godlike family tree, and because of this, his life is much better.

Similarly, Rebecca D. Perez explores acculturation in the lives of Mexican-American college students. In her research, Perez discovered a “significant positive relationship between high scores on cultural resistance and high scores on attitude, as well as a significant negative relationship between high scores on cultural shift and low scores on attitude” (34). It should be noted that the “cultural resistance” that Perez describes as being related to high scores on attitude is intended to mean resistance to the culture into which Mexican-American college students were trying to assimilate. She also mentions a negative correlation between cultural shift and low attitude scores—those who attempt to leave their culture of origin behind entirely (in favor of shifting to the new culture) find themselves leading much less happy lives. This isn’t to say there is an inherent negative effect when trying to immerse oneself in a new culture, but rather that losing ties to one’s original culture—their connection to the past—can be harmful to psyche. There is nothing wrong with adapting to a new culture, but if it comes at the price of full abandonment of the past—as it does for Fat Charlie—there exists a high probability that negative psychological effects will ensue. This perhaps provides further explanation into Fat Charlie’s awkward, miserable nature. With his connections to the past severed (both by choice, as he voluntarily moved to another continent to be away from his father, as well as by will of the universe, as Mrs. Dunwiddy separated him from Spider), Fat Charlie is left with a negative perspective on life that reflects the results found by Perez in her thesis.

While Charlie is part of the same family tree, he outright rejects any meaningful connection with it, even going so far as to move to England just to avoid having to be around his father. Fat Charlie rejects the past, in favour of carving

his own path—and as it turns out, he is worse off for doing so. He doesn't have the magical connection to his family roots that Spider has—partly by choice, and partly just due to luck of the draw when Mrs. Dunwiddy split the original Charlie into two beings. His lack of magic was no choice of his own, but his decision to actively unroot himself from his family and reject a life that involves them *was* his choice—ultimately painting a picture of someone who lives with no connection to the past. This is exemplified in a scenario early on in the story: Spider spends a day pretending to be Charlie. He goes to Charlie's work in place of Charlie, and even romances Charlie's significant other, Rosie—and he gets away with all this by using his magic to make people believe he is Charlie. By this point in the story, we have seen how miserable Fat Charlie's life can be: his boss hates him, and he's not the smoothest in the romance department. However, when Spider steps in, everything instantly turns around. Charlie's boss walks over to Charlie's office to fire him, but since Spider is sitting there instead, the situation has a much more positive outcome than it otherwise might have—Spider instantly deescalates the situation, and is not fired. Additionally, Rosie finds herself much more in love with Spider-as-Charlie than she ever has been with the real Fat Charlie. This is one of the most transparent uses of contrast in the story—we see how the exact same situations (a conversation with a boss, and a conversation with a significant other) would play out differently with each of these two characters. In Charlie's version of these scenarios, things remain quite sour and downtrodden, to the point where the reader almost pities Charlie and his life. In Spider's version of these situations, however, he always comes out on top, and is able to one-up anything Charlie has done with seemingly no effort at all.

The novel also presents a small handful of stories about Anansi's life in ancient times. One particular story details the time Anansi faked his own death to his family just so he could eat as many peas as he wanted from their vineyard while they slept. After his wife and children have buried him, Anansi crawls out of the ground each night to eat as many peas as he can, and then each morning he hides back in his grave so his family never knows he's still alive. Eventually, however, Anansi's wife and children begin to starve since he is eating all their food. In order to fix the situation, Anansi's wife says to her children: "What would your father do?" (Gaiman 126). Anansi is known to be a trickster god, so his sons think back to all the tricky things he has done, and devise a plan to catch whoever is eating all their food. They created a fake man out of tar and put it in the middle of their field. That night, when Anansi comes out to steal more peas, he sees the tar man, and tells the man to leave because this is Anansi's territory. The man, being made



of tar, doesn't answer, so Anansi hits him, and becomes stuck to the tar, and in the morning Anansi's family finds him still sitting in the field, unable to detach himself from the tar man.

This story, like the situation of Fat Charlie and Spider, deals with the ways in which traces of past generations affect current generations. In the case of Fat Charlie and Spider, traces of the past were manifested through which of their father's attributes each inherited. In this old Anansi tale, however, inherited traits are not the main focus. Rather, the sons must align themselves with the type of thinking they would expect of their father in order to catch him. They're using traces of his own personality to catch him—catching the trickster through trickiness. On their own, the family was beginning to starve, but once the sons aligned their thinking with that of their father, they were able to come out successful. The traces of their father still in their minds proved useful and provided a solution to a situation they may otherwise never have solved. One can think of this as similar to Fat Charlie's decision to move to another continent so as to avoid his father—in both Fat Charlie's move, as well as the pea story, Anansi's children choose to perform certain actions based on their relationships to him, and these relationships ultimately demonstrate that a heavier connection to the past (represented in the pea story as a connection to one's father) results in a more positive outcome.

*Anansi Boys* spends a significant amount of time outlining the differences between one who possesses a healthy connection to the past and one who rejects it, and it is only at the end of the story that Gaiman demonstrates what can happen when these positions are modified. Many instances in the story show Spider as being the better-off of the two brothers due to his connection to the past, while Charlie is left miserable and wallowing in his own discomfort due to being unrooted from previous generations. However, at the end of the story, Gaiman provides the reader with a twist, and he does so through the motif of singing. Singing is suggested to hold connections to soldier figures—the novel opens with Anansi singing in a karaoke bar, which is where he had his heart attack. And on their first night together, Spider takes Fat Charlie to a karaoke bar. Even the first line of the novel reads: "It begins, as most things begin, with a song" (1). Through these instances, singing is shown to have a largely negative connotation for Charlie—his father died while singing, and Charlie himself has been shown to be too embarrassed to sing in front of a crowd, to the point of even passing out while trying to sing at the bar on his first night out with Spider. Yet, at the end of the novel, Charlie finally allows himself to sing, thereby ending the way we began—with a song. This is the most concrete example of Charlie's character arc towards becoming a more fully-

realized person, with a much healthier lifestyle. Singing is the vehicle by which this metaphor is carried, and through finally singing—finally connecting himself to the past, as Anansi and Spider are both excellent (and confident) singers—Charlie is able to come out victorious. Gaiman waits until the end of the story to stop contrasting the two brothers, in favour of showing how each respective party can *become* the best version of themselves through rejoining themselves with the past.

Gaiman uses the platform of the fantasy novel to explore a theme central to modern culture: whether the current generation should maintain strong connections to the past, or reject the past in favour of carving their path anew. In the real world, each person's situation is unique, but Gaiman posits that largely, a strong connection to these traces of the past will benefit the person in question. Through Spider, Gaiman demonstrates how these strong connections can pave the way for a better life, and through Fat Charlie, Gaiman suggests that even though one's life may be worsened by severing connections to the past, one is still able to reclaim these connections and pave the way to a better future through a healthier relationship to traces of what has come before.

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# LIDA FORD

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## TRACING MARIA: AN EXAMINATION OF FEMINIST LITERARY DISCOURSE

SINCE HER FIRST APPEARANCE IN 1940, Ernest Hemingway's heroine, Maria, has been the center of controversy in the field of feminist criticism. As the central love interest, a trauma survivor, and a domestic figure in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Maria has become a symbolic representation of the shifting perspectives on feminist issues both in the literary world and beyond. Her character has been interpreted by critics in polarizing fashions, viewed as both a weak, anti-feminist character, as well as a staunch, heroically feminist one. These contrasting interpretations of Maria not only make her a fascinating character, critically speaking, but are also significant as the progression of criticism surrounding Maria parallels the shifts in the feminist movement. By tracing the history of distaste and defense for Maria, we are exposed to the ever-evolving and often contradictory questions about which feminist literary theory is concerned.

Interpretations of Maria can largely be divided into two camps: what I will refer to as the traditional grouping of criticism and the revisionary grouping. The term "traditional" is my own, and refers to those early critics, mostly male, who view Maria as a more traditional female character, and fault her for her perceived

weakness in this role. The term “revisionist” I have borrowed from *Hemingway and Women: Female Critics and the Female Voice*, a collection of critical views presented as revisionary of the traditional critical theory assigned to Hemingway’s work. In her review of the book, Susan Shillinglaw praised the collection of critics for their ability “to see beyond the stereotypical ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ roles of Pilar and Maria to appreciate their complexity, endurance, sexual resolution, and emotional chiaroscuro” (92). It is worth noting here, however, that while, for the most part, the transition from traditional to revisionary criticism occurs at approximately the same time as the 1986 publication of Hemingway’s *The Garden of Eden*, discussed below, there are some traditional critics who hold onto the group’s ideas well into the late 90s. The traditional group of criticism takes the stance that, on the whole, Maria is a docile, weak character, and is evidence of Hemingway’s misogyny. The general thesis of the traditional group of critics, regarding Maria, can be summarized as follows: “[Traditional critics] almost uniformly turned thumbs-down on the character Maria. Theodore Bardacke says that Hemingway ‘recreated Catherine Barkley in the form of Maria, with one important difference - her political convictions’...[or] as Edmund Wilson pointed out, an ‘amoebic’ creature” (Hewson 2). In stark contrast, the revisionary critical view calls for a reexamination of Maria, claiming that her weakness is only skin deep. Gail Sinclair summarizes the revisionist point of view, writing “Maria...suffer[s] the Traditional criticism. She is generally lumped with the other Hemingway fictional women into the two disparate but equally maligned categories...One does find it easy to view Maria as Hemingway’s typically submissive female if only looking at the exposed tip of the iceberg” (95). Other Revisionist critics re-examine given the temporality of the book, such as Stacey Guill who reads Pilar and Maria as homages to the atypical “New Women of Spain,” or attempt to examine Hemingway within a modern context, such as in Carolyn Sparkes’ fictionalized exploration of what it means to confront Hemingway’s relationship with gender in a modern classroom. In total, the revisionist school provides “a necessary corrective to [Traditionalist] attitudes that can, if left unchallenged, set in like rigor mortis” (Shillinglaw 95). The divisive nature of such criticism is precisely what makes Maria a fascinating case study because, by writing about Maria, the critics end up repeating their own feminist viewpoints. I do not wish to cast my stone on either side of the feminist/misogynist scale, as I do not believe Maria’s character falls safely on either side. Rather, I wish to complicate the story, reading Maria in the context of her surroundings, and to “untrace” the historical weight that has been placed on her. Such tracing of the ebb and flow of

the feminist literary theory surrounding Maria points us, as modern critics, past her character and opens the door to larger questions and points of contention for feminist literary theory on a broader scale.

Maria appears in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, a novel that, in line with Hemingway's other works, is centered on the question of what constitutes a hero in the face of the war. The novel centers around the mission of a group of guerilla fighters working to defeat the fascists during the Spanish Civil War and their assigned mission. The novel's protagonist, Robert Jordan, a volunteer detonist from America, must convince the band of guerillas to help him in the demolition of a nearby bridge in order to assist with an upcoming attack. The mission itself is difficult and likely deadly, and is further complicated when Pablo, the band's original leader loses faith in the cause and does not want to participate. Pablo is soon ousted by his wife, Pilar, who takes over as the band's leader and well as the primary caretaker for Maria, a former captive rescued during an earlier mission. Maria and Jordan fall in love in the few days during which the novel is set. Under Pilar's leadership and with Jordan's guidance, the group is able to detonate the bridge, although Jordan is injured and dies in the process. After his service and injury in World War I, Hemingway's opinions on war changed, in line with his other "Lost Generation" peers. Natalie Carter writes that this "bitter disillusionment [regarding war] would be reflected in much of what Hemingway would write" (4). In *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Robert Jordan is plagued by this disillusionment, speculating on multiple occasions about the nature of heroics, life, and war. Hemingway expressed his goals in writing the novel in a 1939 letter to Russian critic Ivan Kashkin: "I would like to be able to write understandingly about both deserters and heroes, cowards and brave men, traitors and men who are not capable of being traitors" (qtd. in Carter 4). In this context, Maria herself becomes more than a domestic figure, instead acting as an anti-war, anti-heteronormative symbol in the novel and as a counterpoint to Jordan, much in the way Catherine Barkley represents all that is separate from World War in *A Farewell to Arms*. As Shillingslaw describes, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* "is as fully about love as war," as demonstrated through Jordan and Maria's relationship which addresses both the former and the latter (94). Robert Jordan, when confronted with the idea of his own death, copes by fantasizing about his future with Maria. Carter writes that Jordan "sees Maria as a representation of all that is good and worth fighting for in this country" (4). This occurs multiple times in the novel, almost from the time they meet. Only mere hours after his encounter with Maria, Robert Jordan thinks about the bridge: "if it were one thing to do it

would be easy. Stop worrying you windy bastard, he said to himself. Think about something else. Think about Maria” (Hemingway 43). This shift in consciousness occurs multiple times in the book, where Jordan’s thoughts of the war give way to more palatable musings of Maria. The most prominent example of this, however, occurs when Jordan not only dreams of a future with Maria but imagines himself in a sort of “happy ending”, rethinking the heroic martyrdom that is all too common in tales with both male and female heroes:

You’ll be safely dead yourself, he told himself. Now stop thinking that sort of thing. Think about Maria.

Maria was very hard on his bigotry. So far she had not affected his resolution but he would much prefer not to die. He would abandon a hero’s or a martyr’s end gladly...He would like to spend some time with Maria. That was the simplest expression of it. He would like to spend a long, long time with her...

Why not marry her? Sure, he thought. I will marry her. Then we will be Mr. and Mrs. Robert Jordan of Sun Valley, Idaho... And when I get my job back at the university she can be an instructor’s wife and when undergraduates who take Spanish come in to smoke pipes in the evening and have those so valuable informal discussions about Quevedo, Lope de Vega, Galdós and the other always admirable dead, Maria can tell them about how some of the blue-shirted crusaders for the true faith sat on her head while others twisted her arms and pulled her skirt up and stuffed them in her mouth. (164)

Deeply troubled by the war, but stifled by heteronormativity, his desire—a life outside of the horrors of war and the machismo heroics that he must perform in that context—is displaced onto Maria. Jordan is fully engaging in what we would easily identify with a female heroine as the “domestic.” His fantasy is not of a heroic or an accomplished life, but instead he longs for a simplistic family life. He dreams of a job and dinner parties, with conversations about heroics safely in the past, and far removed from the horrors of war. He acknowledges, too, that Maria would perhaps be too strong to fit into this lifestyle, as she has struggled and faced things beyond that of the domestic sphere in which he covets. Jordan’s engagement with heroes here is notable. He abandons the idea of a war-based hero’s journey, preferring instead a domestic, family-based one. While this is clearly conjecture on Jordan’s part, it is notable to my analysis that his desire for this lifestyle is in no way presented as contrary to his status as a “strong” character. In a hypermasculine context, Jordan is unable to express these desires on his own, and thus projects them onto the fantasy of Maria, as a symbol of the anti-war.

Like Jordan, Maria, when reminded of her trauma, copes by fantasizing about her future with Jordan after the war. While taking a brief respite from discussions planning the bridge attack, Maria allows herself a fantasy, one that places her and Jordan far away from the horrors of the reality they face:

“Now I am happy,” she said. “Now I am truly happy.”

“You are thinking of something else now?” she asked him.

“Yes. My work.”

“I wish we had horses to ride,” Maria said. “In my happiness, I would like to be on a good horse and ride fast with thee riding fast beside me and we would ride faster and faster, galloping, and never past my happiness.” (161)

Maria, too, uses a fantasy life with Jordan as a crutch to escape the horrible conditions with which she is faced in reality. When Jordan brings up “his work,” the demolition of the bridge that both characters know will likely lead to their death, Maria shifts the conversation topic to an escapist fantasy, engaging in a similar coping mechanism as Jordan. In comparison to Jordan’s domestic fantasy, Maria’s seems quite liberating, focusing on escape and adventure rather than domesticity and home life. In fact, the horses that Maria describes can be read as a symbol of not only freedom, but as an escape from war, as they parallel Pablo’s own horses, which he uses as a temporary respite from the war. Alex Link, writing from a revisionist perspective, summarizes the implications of these scenes, writing that “a careful examination of the way Jordan and Maria idealize both one another and their partisanship reveals the novel’s sense that to aspire to an ideal is both heroic and doomed” (134). It is perhaps because Maria as a character in Jordan’s own fantasy is domestic that she gains this title, but from this passage we can see that her dreams are of a wilder variety.

From these parallels we can infer that Maria and Jordan cope with their own harsh realities in the same way, by indulging in delusions of romantic fantasies. However, unlike Jordan, only Maria is faulted for this coping mechanism, and it is traditionally read as a sign of her weakness. In short, Jordan, as a male protagonist, is well-rounded and likable for his romantic side, a side which also furthers Hemingway’s anti-war themes. For Maria, these domestic or anti-war interests have been traditionally read as “anti-feminist,” as the focus on romance is seen as counterproductive to the heroine’s development as a character. There is no doubt that in certain cases that is true, but to make it an unbreakable rule would be a mistake.

We must not generalize romance as weakness, for to do so would be to rob women of the same luxuries afforded to men. In any male-driven hero narrative, heroes typically end up with one of two endings: death or domesticity. In the case of survival, a romantic, domestic destiny is often presented as the prize to the hero's suffering, as such romantic interest is not seen as counter to the hero's goals but, rather, possibly complementary. The happy ending achieved, the hero himself is in no way lessened by the fact that he craves a domestic, or romantic future. In fact, in many cases this romance is seen as a necessity to balance out the strength of the hero and present a well-rounded character. We see Robert Jordan in the passage above rethinking his own journey, deciding that he would rather live with Maria than die as a martyr. This in no way is presented in the novel as a weakness of Robert Jordan's character. Instead, it affords him a much-needed counter-balance to the excess of stoic machismo. If strength and romance are afforded as complements to the traditional hero, why can the same not be said about the heroine?

This being said, I believe that a purely revisionist-based reading of Maria goes too far. There is no doubt, for instance, that in comparison to Pilar, Maria plays a smaller and less important role in the action of the novel, and in the planning of the bridge. She is afforded little of her own dialogue outside of conversations with Jordan, and is treated as a pet to Jordan, Pilar, and the other fighters. While upon closer examination, Maria's strength can certainly be found, that may be asking too much of readers and too little of Hemingway. Richard Fantina, for example, explores both sides of the critical divide within his own study of machismo in Hemingway, writing that "Although many critics now readily dismiss the old Hemingway myth of machismo, few seem prepared to acknowledge the masochism that prevails in much of his work" (85). Multitudes of writers, both male and female, have proven that it is possible to write an obviously empowered female character, although in doing so one runs the risk of vilifying domesticity for those who are drawn to it. So what are we to do about Maria? If perhaps no definitive answer to the binary can be solved, we must turn our attention instead to those who have attempted to answer this question and what can be learned from their efforts.

"More than any modernist," Shillinglaw writes, "Hemingway the man and the work are one" (95). While most literary critics would fall to Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" and place aside authorial intent in a discussion of a text, it is the unfortunate case that, when examining previous criticism of Hemingway, the interpretation of his work and the author's aura are inseparable. As such we cannot properly examine Maria in her own right without addressing the larger



conversation regarding her character. Too much has been written on Hemingway and gender to give proper treatment to the subject in a paper of this length, but broadly speaking the traditionalist and revisionist ideas on Maria mirror those on Hemingway as well. Hemingway's public persona lent itself to the traditional heteronormative, masculine, machismo interpretation of his works until the 1986 posthumous publication of *The Garden of Eden*. The novel's complicated and nuanced treatment of gender roles and sexuality have led to a complete rethinking of Hemingway's relationship with gender in his writing. As such, the revisionist group was born, critically reexamining previous works. Hewson summarizes the shift, writing that Hemingway's "way is investigated as evidence that the macho public image he cultivated—and that remains the most widely held impression of him as a man and writer—hid a more troubled soul from view" (171).

Still, both groups are prominent voices in the debate over Hemingway and, by extension, over Maria. Traditionalist writers view her solely in the context of her author, stating that Maria is "the Hemingway woman, living to serve the physical and emotional needs of her man, romanticized beyond anything in earlier novels" (2). In contrast, Revisionist writers argue for new ways of looking at Hemingway, via his female characters. Carter expresses her frustration at the traditional treatment of Maria by critics, writing that the character of Maria "has been almost entirely...dismissed outright, especially by feminist critics who tend to view her as one of Hemingway's submissive dream girls" (4). Similarly, revisionist critic Sinclair argues:

[Maria and Pilar] are not easily reducible, nor should they be, to the traditional polemic extremes critically assigned to Hemingway's functional women. To view the women of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* in a more powerful and important role, even to read them as code heroes, of a sort, does not reduce Hemingway's males but broadens our understanding of the writer's more complex vision and its ability to reach beyond the formulaic, restrictive code. This revisionist perspective only enhances Hemingway's significance as one of this century's preeminent artists. (108)

Finally, Fantina finely traces such gendered nuances in Hemingway's broader work, writing that "as an artist, Hemingway expresses an alternative masculinity that on the surface seems diametrically opposed to that which he publicly em-

braced...Hemingway's embodiment of diverse models of masculinity may be his greatest legacy" (85).

Regardless of which side one may fall on, the aura of Hemingway certainly inserts itself into any analysis of Maria. Frustrating as this complete dismissal of Barthes' rule may be, the divide also points to another critical problem present in the debate surrounding Maria: a complete lack of tolerance for any grey space. It is Hewson who makes this point, and though he goes on to fall squarely in the Revisionist camp of criticism, it is his initial analysis of Hemingway at the time that *For Whom the Bell Tolls* was written that seems the most balanced and the most accurate. Hewson writes:

What we find in [For Whom the Bell Tolls] appears to be an older, more tempered and more accommodating Hemingway... [closer to] posthumously published texts such as *Islands in the Stream* and *The Garden of Eden*. It thus marks an important turning point in Hemingway's career...we might profitably view this novel as the result of Hemingway's growing need to reassess, through writing, his interaction with stereotypical conceptions of masculinity and femininity...and therefore as a rehearsal ground for the more conscious experiments he would undertake in those later manuscripts which are now considered to be primary evidence of his conflicted feelings about gender and sexuality. (173)

If we must accept the author's intentions as critically important, then let us at least accept an author who is realistic, and not a caricature of backward misogyny, nor a saint of feminist liberation. Hemingway was likely neither of these things but fell as most do somewhere in the middle of the complicated critical divide. His aura addressed, let us move our analysis on to the subject herself, and examine Maria's place in this critical chasm.

Maria's background must be acknowledged in any conversation about her strength as a female character. Maria herself is no weakling, her strength lies in her ability to cope with her traumatic past. She describes the horrors she underwent during the fascist takeover in her village, in which her father and mother were murdered and she was tortured and raped"

I saw both of them shot and my father said, "Viva la República," when they shot him standing against the wall of the slaughterhouse of our village. My

mother standing against the same wall said, “Viva my husband who was the Mayor of this village,” and I hoped they would shoot me too and I was going to say “Viva la República y vivan mis padres,” but instead there was no shooting but instead the doing of the things. . . . (350– 52)

Despite this trauma, Maria remains courageous and strong. This strength is exemplified by how she falls into a caring role for others, rather than dwelling in her experiences. Regarding Maria’s rape and torture, only the revisionist camp of critics have commented on it in terms of an indication of her strength as a character. In contrast, traditional critics historically have failed to view Maria in terms of her place in recovering from trauma (Whitlow 3). As such, little can be offered in argument from the traditional camp in regards to how Maria’s trauma is read. On the revisionist side however, this trauma is evidence of her status as a strong female character. Sinclair argues that “Maria’s trauma pair her with Hemingway’s male heroes such as Jake Barnes and Frederic Henry who also bear physical reminders of their war injuries. Significantly, Maria is the only Hemingway female with such distinction” (98). Additionally, Sinclair argues that it is the strength that Maria exhibits in relationship to this trauma that also makes her a strong female character:

In a sense, Maria is an amalgamation of all the worst kinds of suffering in Hemingway. She sustains a physical wound like most of the male heroes, shares with many of the women the death of a lover, and carries the psychological damage with which all Hemingway characters live. Maria achieves some measured triumph over hellish circumstances, however, by not remaining the emotional “ruin” she was initially. (100)

Guill writes that while “understandably, Maria has been severely traumatized by the atrocities she witnessed and the terror she experienced. . . . over the course of the narrative she undergoes a much more subtle, yet deeply powerful transformation in her character. . . . [and] becomes progressively more assertive as the story unfolds” (13). Finally, Carter reads Maria’s reactions to trauma, in light of modern psychological knowledge, writing “I contend that Maria’s silences should be read not as a sign of weakness, but as a post-traumatic subject’s testimonial” (10).

While it would be easy to simply consider this a point for the revisionist side, the shift in addressing Maria’s trauma is also notable. Sinclair wrote in 2002, notably after most of the traditionalist critics and also at the beginning of a time when rape and its traumatic effects, were coming to light at the forefront of feminist

issues. While traditional critics viewed Maria in light of how she was “supposed” to behave as a soldier, revisionist critics view her in light of how she would likely behave as a rape survivor. The shift not only parallels a shift in focusing on rape as a societal and feminist issue, but also parallels a shift in feminist thought, as Maria is no longer judged by how closely she fits a traditional male based stereotype of strength, but how she exhibits strength given her experiences as a woman.

In line with the progression from second- to third-wave feminism, traditional critics generally fault Maria for her sexual relationship with Jordan while revisionist critics view it as a source of empowerment. From the traditionalist point of view, Maxwell Geismar claims, “Maria is on the whole more theatrical than substantial. She is a sort of compendium of the virtues of the modern proletariat mistress” (2). Additionally Mark Schorer observes that Maria is “that perfect sexual creature of the private Hemingway mythology,” (2) and Philip Young writes that “Maria is just too ethereal for the world she inhabits” (2). Her highly desirable, sexual nature is viewed by traditional critics as evidence that she is an unrealistic, two-dimensional character. Sinclair, from a revisionist point of view, reads Maria’s flirtatious interactions with Jordan as liberatory: “Her demeanor does not present an emotionally broken and withdrawn victim, but instead a coquettish air suggesting comfortable familiarity” (101). Additionally, revisionists justify Maria’s sexualization as a counterpoint to the threat of eminent death in the novel. Hewson summarizes the revisionist idea that “that Jordan and Maria’s love and lovemaking are concretizations of feeling and emotion” that “resist the erosion of time and the corrosive forces of death” (174). Carter reads Maria’s apparent lack of reaction to her sexualization by Jordan and the other guerillas as equally justifiable, writing, “Maria’s speech patterns are timid because she occupies the dangerous position of a woman intruding on a hypermasculinized battle space” (9).

Not only do these differing viewpoint show a contrast in second- and third-wave feminist thinking on sexuality, but the focus of the criticism on Maria is significant as well. Traditionalists fault Maria for her sexualized nature, claiming that Hemingway’s physical description of her is problematic. Revisionists instead examine her sexuality in terms of her actions, and read them as liberatory. It is worth noting that Maria does fall subject to Jordan’s objectifying gaze multiple times in the novel, and as such I am not sure that the revisionist argument is sufficient proof of a completely liberated character, at least in the way Hemingway’s writing about her. That being said, the shift in focus on what is important in examining Maria in terms of her sexuality is a fascinating one, and the parallels to shifting waves of the feminist movement show up in our last example.

Finally, Maria's domestic role must be addressed as a point of contention. In the machismo context of the Spanish Civil War, Maria stands out as a domestic figure. As a representative of all the aspects of a non-war, (i.e. the anti-Pilar, a female representative of all things war), Maria comes to represent desire, not simply in a sexual or domestic sense, but in a pacifist assertion. Throughout the novel, Maria serves as a cook, cleaner, and general homemaker of the camp. Even in Jordan's fantasies she acts in a similar manner. In contrast to Pilar, who is the clear leader of the group, Maria's role in the band does initially seem limited.

Certainly, many traditionalist critics have trouble with Maria's domestic role. In a prominent example, Carl Eby takes this view to the extreme claiming that the rabbit stew Maria serves Jordan is in some way a symbol of his perverse attraction to her as a rape victim, via the implications of her nickname "rabbit." While divisive, Eby's case is important in an historical sense as it exemplifies the bizarre and reductive means by which early traditional Hemingway "feminist" criticism was conducted. Though published in 1998, Eby's work is a telling example of how traditionalist viewpoints influenced critical views on Maria. Revisionists, however, view this domestic nature in light of the Maria's trauma. In regards to the categorization of the nickname, "rabbit," Link offers a completely different viewpoint, writing, "the nickname contributes to the novel's delineation of the complex process of embracing, understanding, and dying for an impossible ideal" (135). The divisive criticism over even such a small point at Maria's pet name, further illustrates the ways Maria is categorized on such a polar scale.

When caring for Pilar's band in the cave, Maria expresses that her experiences, while traumatizing, have been put aside. Pilar says, "But [Joaquín's trauma] can molest the Maria. She has too many things of her own," to which Maria replies, "Qué va... Mine are such a big bucket that yours falling in will never fill it" (139). Her strength is evident on her own, although it takes its form in the domestic sphere. Maria copes with her trauma by caring for those around her, and as such, is symbolic of all that is the antithesis of war. When faced with destruction, Maria responds with softness. Sinclair reads this interaction as follows: "Maria also lasts and downplays her own trauma to show generosity for another... Maria is able to bear her own pain as well as ease and comfort what Joaquín suffers. Both Maria and Pilar exhibit a stoic courage we might hold up to that of the young male Hemingway protagonists—Robert Jordan, Jake Barnes, Frederic Henry" (97). Carter reads Maria's domestic actions as demonstrating "the totality of the psychological impact that the war has had on this group, as they seek to recreate some semblance of normativity after the war" (9). Revisionists argue that her strength is evident on its

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own, although it takes its form in the domestic sphere. This again represents a significant shift in thinking. Domesticity and softness is viewed by the Traditionalists as a sign of weakness and by the Revisionists as, in this particular circumstance, a sign of strength. Once again, the criticism is shifted and Maria, once viewed in light of a new take on feminism, takes on a different tone.

Feminism takes on many forms and represents a multitude of opinions and viewpoints, often contradictory. Nothing represents this mosaic of ideas more than the character of Maria. The criticism around everything from her sexuality, to her trauma, to her creator himself, takes on a tone not of textual analysis but of amplification of the current feminist norms. Maria forces one to ask about the conscious and unconscious influences and intention that go into analysis. What can truly be said about Maria in light of all of this? Very little, except, perhaps, this: Maria, so far, has exemplified just how stubborn one's own viewpoint can be, and how even readings of a fictionalized Spanish girl can be overtaken by the critical agenda of the time.

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# ALEXIS GARCIA

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## TRACES OF HUMANITY: EMPATHY IN PHILIP K. DICK’S *DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?*

“And—here is a thought not too pleasing – as the external world becomes more animate, we may find that we – the so-called humans – are becoming, and may to a great extent always have been, inanimate in a sense that we are led, directed by built-in tropisms, rather than leading.”

Philip K. Dick, *The Android and the Human*

Perhaps what captivates the human imagination the most is the android, the mechanical imitation of ourselves. In modern society, the possibility of constructing intelligent life has become increasingly attainable, and as such, societies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century remain fascinated with the concept of the android. From HBO’s hit television series *Westworld*, a remake of the 1971 film, to PlayStation 4’s triple-A title *Detroit: Become Human*, western media continues to reinvent and reimagine the impact of androids on society. Philip K. Dick presented his take on the android in society: they are sentient beings, physically identical to humankind, and vastly intelligent to the point where they’ve begun to outpace portions of the human



population. As they become more indistinguishable from humankind, androids—crafted in the image of their creators—challenge the core tenets of what it means to be human and force the reader to reevaluate the definitions of empathy. The form of empathy displayed by the androids of Dick's novel is a reinvention of human empathy, now unrecognizable to a human society that has redefined the emotion, despite embodying traces of former forms of human empathy.

In the irradiated world of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, humankind has already embarked on a mass exodus to new colonies on Mars. As an incentive, androids are given as free gifts to human immigrants, and are forbidden to be on Earth. Unbeknownst to the public, androids frequently flee illegally from the colonies, and are hunted down by a secret elite police force known as bounty hunters. Rick Deckard, one of two characters whose points-of-view we hear in the book, is one of these bounty hunters, and the reader follows him on his quest to hunt down six androids who recently escaped to Earth. The first quarter of Deckard's narrative is business as usual. The "retirement," or, more bluntly, the killing of the first android, Pokolov, is relatively cut-and-dried: Deckard executes him with ease after a short conflict. It is his encounter with the second android on his list that complicates matters.

In the novel, empathy, and the lack of it, is the fundamental pillar upholding human society. In the case of androids, their incapacity for empathy is the justification to use them as slave labor to support the arduous process of human colonization. Humankind supposedly has empathy, and yet legitimizes the enslavement and killing of artificially intelligent lifeforms. It is even implied that androids are kept as mistresses. Human society uses the apparent capacity for empathy to justify their human superiority, and simultaneously uses the androids lack of empathy as criteria for their enslavement. This becomes more ironic, and more reprehensible, as the humans in the novel seems be even more deficient in empathetic capacities than the androids.

After admiring the performance of android-turned-opera singer Luba Luft, Deckard sits in her dressing room preparing to give her the empathy test that will identify her as an imposter. The singer deflects, insisting that she could not be an android because she is willing to help Deckard track down the android hidden in the cast, to which the bounty hunter replies:

"An android," he said, "doesn't care what happens to another android. That's one of the indications we look for."

"Then," Miss Luft said, "you must be an android."

That stopped him; he stared at her. (Dick 94)

The test that Deckard plans to administer to Luba is the Voight-Kampff

Empathy test, which tests for physical indications of an empathetic response by presenting the subject with a series of questions usually related to the death of animals—which have become prized commodities in a post-war nuclear irradiated world. One of the defining characteristics of the androids is their inability to feel empathy, and it is this trait that separates humans from their mechanical imitations.

Up until this passage, Deckard is the one in control. He already knows Luba is an android—the test is a mere legal formality. The bounty hunter deliberately approaches her in her private dressing room, where no one could interfere or protect her. The opera singer herself also knows the gravity of her situation: she is cornered and there is nowhere to run. Deckard, by all accounts, is the predator; however, her reply to him immediately turns the tables on the situation.

Luba's quip could be considered a form of a logical syllogism: if an android is regarded to lack empathy towards all forms of life, including other androids, and if all humans do not care about what happens to androids, then all humans must be androids because they have no empathy. This implication is enough to give Deckard pause, shocking him into silence. Deckard's reaction is given special attention by Dick via the use of a semicolon. The initial stop and subsequent stare are balanced with the punctuation mark. Both reactions are given equal emphasis. Deckard is hushed into silence and prompted, perhaps for the first time, to truly look upon the being he plans to execute. The reader is also forced to contemplate their thoughts on Deckard's actions and reevaluate the casual attitude towards android death.

The weight of Luba's statement is further emphasized by the style and syntax. The short, simple sentences make the dialogue flow quickly. The short sentence form lends itself to become a quick accusation, and the lack of the question mark spins the remark as a blunt statement of fact. Perhaps not that humans are literally androids, but instead that they do not remotely care about the wellbeing of an android. The implication of humankind's lack of empathy becomes a recurring theme throughout the book as Deckard, a man who in the first chapter argued that he was not a murderer because he only killed androids, now begins to question why androids need to be retired in the first place, and whether androids are truly that different from humans.

There is something ironic in the revelation that humans are equally lacking in empathy, despite executing and exploiting androids for the same reason. The androids' lack of empathy is the primary justification for a life of forced servitude and hard labor, functioning as "the mobile donkey engine of the colonization program" as humans flee to new colonies on Mars (16). Human society is absolved

of any guilt or consequences from killing and abusing androids via this technicality, which is furthermore alluded to as a “deliberately built-in defect” (170). The implication that androids were designed to be empathetically deficient in order to justify their existence as intelligent slave labor casts an additional shadow on humankind.

Luba’s response to Deckard becomes more significant to both the reader and the bounty hunter when viewed in context of the previous chapters. The narrator of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is an omniscient third party; however, we are not consistently privy to the private thoughts of the two primary characters, Deckard and another human, Isidore. Despite this, Deckard functions as a narrative vehicle for the development of the reader’s personal thoughts about androids. Up until this point, Deckard’s thoughts toward androids are very cold and clinical. He spends much of his narrative, when not actively hunting androids, planning what kind of animal to buy with the money he will receive from the slaughter of androids. When he listens to Luba sing in her rehearsal, he comments on the beauty of her voice and ponders how to kill her. Deckard frequently refers to androids as “andys,” a diminutive term for android, instead of calling them by their names, further generalizing and dehumanizing them. Right before confronting Luba, Deckard becomes full of “hungry, gleeful anticipation,” unabashedly looking forward to eliminating his android prey (89). His ambivalence is a result of the brutality of his job: one cannot effectively kill if they feel empathy towards the target. The omniscient third-person narrative provides enough distance that Deckard’s thoughts do not become the reader’s, allowing us to judge the way he thinks about and interacts with androids and develop thoughts of our own.

Luba’s suggestion, that he too is an uncaring android, hits him hard because Deckard is suddenly confronted with his own lack of empathy. Despite having taken the Voight-Kampff test earlier in his career, there is one downfall of the system: it does not test for empathetic responses towards androids. This flaw follows Deckard throughout the rest of the novel, particularly when confronted with the brutality and lack of empathy of other humans, such as fellow bounty hunter, Resch. As the pair corner Luba, Deckard begins to believe that Resch may unknowingly be an android, due to his eagerness to execute Luba. When Resch tests out as human, Deckard is shaken by the revelation that a person could be so brutal. Resch’s lack of empathy towards android suffering is described to be “nothing unnatural or unhuman” (132). Reluctant to execute Luba due to his physical attraction to her, Deckard is forced to confront his newfound emotional response in the face of the previous ease he had when killing androids. Resch’s, and formerly Deckard’s, lack of empathy seems to be the human standard when confronted with androids, yet

humankind as a whole seems to be unaware of this phenomenon.

Deckard seems shaken by this revelation. And this is what Luba uses to claw herself back into power, allowing her time to call for help—from another android to boot, and makes her escape to live a little longer until Resch retires her later that day. Deckard is left to process the reversal of his situation, now being taken into custody, pushed to start questioning the nature of the society around him.

The humans of the world of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* widely practice a spiritual religion known as Mercerism. Arising from the ashes after World War Terminus, the war that destroyed the planet and most animal life, one of the core beliefs is to have empathy for other individuals. Despite this, androids are the exception. Excluded from Mercerism, android life is not valued—Baty's info sheet notes the android as believing in the "pretentious fiction as to the sacredness of so-called android 'life,'" which construes a human view of android life as worthless (169). Escaped androids find that the life of an organic animal is considered more important than their own. As Garland tells Deckard, Earth is "where every worm and wood louse is considered more desirable than all of us put together" (113).

Along with the "enslaved" androids, animals have become commodities in this new human society. In the aftermath of World War Terminus, the majority of animal species went extinct. What little animals remain are bred and sold as luxury goods that represent one's wealth and status. In Sherryl Vint's analysis of speciesism and the role of animals in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, an animal also functions as "an expression of one's humanity" (112). Due to their rarity, there is a widespread electric animal black-market where people can purchase artificially made animals to covet and display while also participating in the public ritual of caring for one. Animals are no longer eaten by society at large, and many of the questions in the Voight-Kampff Empathy Test measure empathetic responses and disgust to the consumption of organic animals, such as being presented with boiled dog, consumption of oysters, and preparing lobster by cooking it alive. Animal products and décor such as leather wallets, bearskin rugs, and mounted deer heads, along with other animal blood sports, are additionally supposed to elicit disgust and empathetic responses.

However, the affection and empathy for animals also reads as hollow. Deckard has been caring for an electric copy of his sheep, after the organic one perished. Yet, the electric copy does not exist to fill a void left behind by the loss of a beloved animal companion, instead it is a way to engage in an elaborate social charade due to "the loss of economic status this would imply" to his neighbors (= 116). This is echoed in a later scene with Isidore, the other character whose point-of-view we

are privy to, and perhaps the only truly empathetic human in the novel. Employed as an undercover vet service to fix electronic animals, Isidore one day picks up an organic cat on accident. Moaning in pain as it dies, Isidore is distressed despite believing it to be a mechanical imitation. He remarks to himself that perhaps it is due to his lowered mental capabilities that he is “reduced to this ignominious task with its attendant emotional by-products,” since his bosses are not moved by the sound of mechanical suffering and Isidore’s empathy is framed as culturally abnormal (Dick 68). Once the staff discover that the cat was organic, they discuss how much it was worth, and focus on humiliating Isidore by forcing him to inform the owner.

It is not only androids that human society treats terribly, humans also lack empathy towards humans known as “specials,” of which Isidore is the prime example. A “special,” also known by the more derogatory term “chickenhead,” is someone with corrupted genes or impaired cognition arising from radiation exposure. Regarded as “biologically unacceptable, a menace to the pristine heredity of the race,” they are barred from emigrating to Mars and doomed to the remains of a ruined Earth (16). As a special, Isidore is forcefully put in a position of helplessness, subject to the verbal abuse of his employers, and is cast out of human society for situations out of his control. He has become subhuman in the same way that androids are. An escaped android, Irmgard, even remarks that their suffering is comparable, and that “they don’t treat him [Isidore] very well either” (151). While the androids are exploited for slave labor, “specials” are abandoned on Earth as they cannot be exploited and are regarded as useless to space-faring human society.

It is repeatedly mentioned throughout *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* that androids lack empathy for humans, animals, and each other. This stance is taken up by the androids themselves in times of stress, however, the actions of the android characters speak otherwise. Androids are perceived to be prone to betraying one another to ensure their individual survival, but when Luba comes face-to-face with a bounty hunter that would surely kill her she calls on an android for help. Garland, an android disguised as a bounty hunter, continues to protect his android companions rather than give them up, even after his true identity is discovered. In the minutes before his execution, Garland actively works to sow discord and distrust between Deckard and Resch in hopes that the two will eliminate one another instead of hunting down the remaining androids.

Another fugitive android, Pris, refers to her fellow androids as friends; she worries about their well-being, remarking to Isidore that if Roy and Irmgard were killed her continued survival “really doesn’t matter. They’re my best friends” (137). Upon her reunion with the pair, Pris rejoices and then later mourns after learning about the deaths of the androids who did not survive. Furthermore, androids

are capable of love for one another, as seen with Roy and Irmgard. The pair of androids, in the few chapters in which they appear, have a seemingly more loving and happy relationship than Deckard has with his wife Iran. When Irmgard is executed by Deckard, Roy lets out a “cry of anguish,” the first real emotion we see from him (205). Androids are capable of experiencing empathy towards each other. However, it is not traditional human empathy. It should be noted that the nature of human empathy for the people of the *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* has vastly changed in the wake of the mass-extinction-inducing world war and is a far cry from the type of empathy common to Dick’s readers. In the way that beginning artists trace outlines in order to learn how to draw, androids retraced and mimicked human empathy until they could create their own.

In an interview several years after publishing *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, Philip K. Dick spoke at a conference about the recurring themes in his narrative work and his personal thoughts on technology and the difference between the machine and the human. On the topic of growing complexity of technology and their ability to mimic human behavior, he said:

...what machines do may resemble what we do, but certainly they do not have intent in the sense that we have; they have tropisms, they have purpose in the sense that we build them to accomplish certain ends and to react to certain stimuli. (“The Android and the Human,” 4)

Dick’s personal thoughts on technology directly oppose the narrative actions he wrote for the humans of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* The nature of the Voight-Kampff test is to measure learned responses to social stimuli. The average human of our 21<sup>st</sup> century would likely fail the Voight-Kampff empathy test, as our standards for what is acceptable is different than the humans of the novel living in a world ravaged by a mass-extinction-inducing world war. The human species is socialized to respond to stimuli in a specific way. Beginning from birth and continuing for the rest of our lives, these socially ingrained reactions and responses can range from learning what kind of behavior is socially unacceptable, or what constitutes bad manners, but this also ranges to empathy and the way we interact with others. The humans of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* may have ended the consumption of animals and worked to minimize their suffering out of empathy, but it is also very likely that this learned response arises instead because the nature of society has changed to the point that this is now a learned response. This transformation emerges in the scene with Rachel Rosen, the first android in the novel to undergo the Voight-Kampff test. While she tests out as an android, one of

the members of the android-manufacturing Rosen company attempts to pass her off as a human girl raised on a spaceship. In her isolation, she learned about Earth and human society off recorded tapes in order to learn the correct social responses. While in reality she was an android the entire time, this situation in the book poses an interesting question: are the humans of the book also parroting socially ingrained responses, or are they truly feeling empathetic emotions?

In some cases, some autistic children have been known to experience empathetic deficiencies as a byproduct of difficulty with social interaction and communication. To combat this, autistic children often undergo a long process to learn and develop empathy by “patient explicit inquiry, reliance on testimony and inference from past situations” (Kennett 351). No reasonable person in modern-day society would declare an autistic person devoid of empathy and therefore less-than human because they process emotion a different way, and the same principle can be applied to the androids of the book. By attempting to mimic human empathy, androids have created an empathy of their own, in which androids empathize with humans. Humankind, for all the harm they have caused to androids, is not deserving of their empathy, although Irmgard empathizes with Isidore’s plight as a “special” and urges the other androids to treat him kindly. Even moments of cruelty, such as when Pris rips legs off a spider to see if it could walk with only four, are not motivated by malicious intent, it is an experiment. There is little difference in how scientists of the modern-day experiment on mice or test makeup products on animals, and it comes off as hypocritical to condemn androids for actions formerly excusable in the human past.

It may be the case that androids have always had empathy, but in the face of its difference, humanity twisted the narrative to fit their own purposes. After World War Terminus, it likely became imperative that human society as a whole work to prevent that level of destruction and conflict from ever occurring again. Mercerism, the religion practiced by humankind, is a means to this end, uniting humankind in a shared empathetic collective and stressing the community and preventing the harm of another individual. However, Mercerism excludes androids, therefore removing them from being treated with empathy. The execution of androids is diametrically opposed to the pillars of Mercerism, which are to never harm another living being. Iran, Deckard’s wife, calls him a murderer on the first page of the book, to which Deckard hostilely replies: “I’ve never killed a human being in my life” (Dick 3). By being excluded from the Mercer experience, androids are lesser, also contributing to their abuse at the hands of humankind. Androids are noted to be incapable of engaging in the Mercer experience, but it is unclear whether this was done by design. As Irmgard remarks that “without the Mercer

experience we just have your *word* that you can feel this empathy business, this shared, group thing” (193). Empathy has been weaponized to maintain a united collective human race and create vilified outgroups to prevent another world-ending inter-human conflict.

*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* was published in 1968, at the midpoint of the Cold War and the in wake of the second Red Scare. It was a period rife with tension and developed an “us versus them” mentality, where Communists were vilified as an evil other. Philip K. Dick and his wife were even questioned by FBI agents in 1955. Aspects of the Cold War are reflected in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, in which humankind are the capitalist Americans and the androids fulfill the role of the Communist others, a threat to the sanctity of human life and the definition of what it means to be human.

The *Blade Runner* film series, based on Dick’s novel, released its first film in 1982. While some plot aspects deviate greatly from the book, the central theme remains the same, as it concerns itself with the nature of humanity and the boundaries of empathy. In his book analyzing themes in science-fiction films, Per Schelde pinpoints the role-reversal between the film characters of Deckard and Roy Baty. The android is too likeable, whereas Deckard, played by the usually charismatic Harrison Ford, alienates the viewer. Schelde argues that this was intentional, that Deckard, and the rest of the human characters, struggle with “empathy and emotions”, forgetting what it meant “to be human” (232). For the androids, this is not the case. Like their book counterparts, they play the complex, sympathetic underdogs, “neophytes at being ‘human,’ a new species, a new link on the evolutionary chain and desperate to be more than just slaves, fighters, workers. They are not quite human, but they strive toward the light” (232). Androids are not the villain, in both forms of media, but beings trying to escape terrible circumstances that were forced upon them.

One of the most beautiful aspects of science fiction is its ability to reflect and explore humanity’s highest hopes, and our greatest fears. However, the genre inherently seems defined by a morbid fascination with disaster, horror, and exploring the hubris and downfall of humankind in a world full of technology that continually seems on track to outpace our species. As Dick once said: “Our field, science fiction, deals with that portion of the life-cycle of our species which extends ahead of us” (“The Android and the Human,” 23). The androids depicted in Dick’s novel become more feasible as the years march on, and sooner, rather than later, humankind will have to figure out how to coexist with new intelligent life. In his book examining robots in science fiction film, Telotte identifies the android as a figure which elicits fears of human obsolescence and forces us to confront “the



problematic nature of human being and the difficult task of being human” (2). As technology continues to advance, humankind feels the need to define the boundaries and definitions of what it means to be human, and how we retain those qualities when we cease being the sole humanoid, intelligent lifeform on this planet.

To be human should not be defined by exclusionary criteria, but instead by an open-minded acceptance towards others. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* functions as a cautionary tale, as Dick traces the potential path of our human future. He presents his readers with an ugly reflection of human cruelty when we forget the importance of empathy for those different than us. It is important to remember that empathy is not stagnant. It changes and evolves over time and will continue to do so until one day, where it may include more than just humankind. Jim Sinclair said in regard to his autism: “Grant me the dignity of meeting me on my own terms—recognize that we are equally alien to each other, and that my ways of being are not merely damaged versions of yours” (Kennett 357). As a society and a species, humankind must remember to treat everyone with empathy, regardless of how different we find them to be, so that the future may be bright for everyone.

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# MARY GREEN

## KEN KANEKI OUTSIDE OF THE PANELS: MANGA AS A BRIDGE INTO THE HYPERREAL

Mary Green is a senior comparative literature and Japanese double major with a minor in cartoon and comics studies. Her interdisciplinary studies have allowed her to explore a range of interests including cultural studies, semiotics, visual media, and pop culture. This year, Mary has been researching the ways in which comics are read and how their formal qualities contribute to the globalization of the medium.

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**THE STORY OF *TOKYO GHOUL*** begins as Tokyo resident Ken Kaneki is going about his business, eating at a cafe and chatting with his best friend Hide while a gory news story about an outbreak of flesh-eating ghouls plays in the background. As the two boys discuss what it might be like to be a ghoul disguised as a human, a cute girl walks into the cafe, sits down by herself, and begins reading a book by Kaneki's favorite author. After being prodded by Hide, Kaneki builds up enough courage to finally talk to her, and for some reason she actually likes him and agrees to go on a date with him. But before long on their first date, she drives her teeth into his shoulder and reveals herself to be a horrific, bloodthirsty ghoul looking to make a meal of Kaneki. Kaneki runs for his life, grappling with the odd tentacles that sprout from her body until one impales him through the stomach. Right before she can confirm her kill and reap the bounty of Kaneki's flesh, she is brutally crushed beneath some falling steel beams. Kaneki, unable to move and fading away, closes his eyes and waits to die. The next thing he sees is a doctor. He hears a fragment of a sentence, "...her organs transplanted into him." After that he is never the same. He begins to experience a hunger for flesh and a repulsion for the food he once loved. He wonders how this fate, being in a body that is half ghoul and half human, the first of its kind, in a lonely liminal space between possibility and absurdity, could even be real at all.

There are over 500 unique images of Ken Kaneki (approximately 562, including images of singular body parts such as hands) within the first volume of *Tokyo Ghoul* by Ishida Sui. Each of these images reiterates the character, forming his personality and subjectivity. By tracing the character over and over, Ishida creates this originless simulacrum repeatedly. Along with the public and private spaces within the comic in which Kaneki and other characters exist, Ishida not only forms a simulation of the subject and a simulated world—the diegesis, or the entire internal world in which the story takes place—but also creates a simulated ideology which in turn simulates the act of interpellation, creating a mimesis, or a reproduction of an element of the external world within the internal world. By giving the character subjectivity within its diegesis, through means that exist within the “real world,” i.e. Althusserian interpellation and hailing and Benveniste’s subjectivity in language, there exists an intrinsic fusion of the real and the simulated.

That which exists in the indistinction between the simulated and the real is what the philosopher Jean Baudrillard refers to as the “hyperreal.” Jean Baudrillard argues that the hyperreal constitutes a reality that is just as real as reality as we know it because it is “sheltered from the imaginary, and from any distinction between the real and the imaginary” (3). Because Ken Kaneki is encoded by the real, is a model of the real, yet is lacking an origin within the real, he is a character of hyperreality. Further, it is exactly the unique formal properties of a comic, manga, specifically—that position Kaneki within the hyperreal as an interactable subject, thus allowing the reader direct access to the hyperreal. By examining the character of Ken Kaneki in *Tokyo Ghoul*, this essay will explore the ways in which manga formally functions and how those functions interact with established ideological apparatuses to position both the characters and the reader as subjects. Furthering this topic, we will also see how the convergence of the formal functions of a manga and the simulations of ideology creates a bridge into the hyperreal, allowing for the creation and spread of layered simulacra. By exploring texts by famed comics theorists and contemporary cultural theorists and applying their research to Ken Kaneki, I argue that the elements that make manga unique as a form are what allow for manga to be an easy bridge into hyperreality. It is through *Tokyo Ghoul*’s simultaneous use of abstraction, simulacrum, various panel transitions, mimesis, and coded texts and images that the life and subjectivity of Ken Kaneki is spawned and sustained, traced and retraced, within the hyperreal.

### The Hyperreal

Hyperreality, as described by Baudrillard, is a concept within postmodernity that exists as a figurative place, an ideological realm, where the differentiation between real and reproduction of real is no longer consciously distinguishable. The hyperreal exists when simulation is given the same realness value as the real, and therefore is the real, or hyperreal. Jean Baudrillard uses an example of a simulation of an illness that produced the of symptoms of a real illness. If the patient shows symptoms of illness, even if they are simulating the illness, then the person is ill. This stands in contrast to a person merely faking an illness and convincing others of illness by staying in bed (3).

To create an example of this same idea from within *Tokyo Ghoul*, one only needs to look as far as the very character of the ghoul and Ken Kaneki's role within ghoul society. When Kaneki first begins his struggle with his ghoulish condition, he finds refuge in a cafe that is run by benevolent ghouls. Within the story, the cafe being owned and operated by ghouls does not make it *not* a cafe. Ghouls are like humans, they look like humans, act like humans, and can be completely indistinguishable from humans. To the human characters, the ghoul waitress of the cafe seems like a waitress, is signified as a waitress through dress, behavior, language, and so forth, and performs the duties of a waitress. Her value as a waitress is the same whether she is a genuine human waitress or a precise imitation, a simulacrum without origin—meaning she is not based on any other person in particular—of a waitress. In that position, then, she is successful as a figure in hyperreality, as is the cafe itself. The ghouls in general are a type of simulacrum of humans, while not based on any other humans in particular, and yet do run the risk of being fake rather than that simulation in any given circumstance. Ken Kaneki, who is forced to live in the realms both of the ghoul and real human stands in the narrative as a bridge between both sides, making him the least distinguishable character in terms of ghoul and human, even to himself. Therefore, Ken Kaneki represents an optimal example of a character of hyperreality.

Continuing this example of the ghoul as simulation, one must understand that Kaneki is not just a type of simulation within the narrative, but also in the very sense that the lines on the page are interpreted in such a way that fills them with a value that allows for one to say or think, "*he is a person.*" Furthermore, it is the words in his speech bubbles, the spacing between the panels, the very way in which he is drawn and traced, that allow the reader to understand him as a subject. In other words, it is the comic itself that brings him to life and bridges the reader to the subject.

### **How We Read Manga**

When talking about the more basic levels of how a comic functions, comics theorist Charles Hatfield defines both image and text in a comic as a “code”, which is to say that images can work semiotically in the same way that textual language does in conveying meaning and vice versa (36-37). Hatfield argues that in a comic, both image and text work together and/or separately to create meaning (37). Baudrillard also discusses the idea of code when it comes to the simulated. Baudrillard argues about simulation that “their artificial resurrection (is) in a system of signs, a material more malleable than meaning, in that it lends itself to all systems of equivalences” (2). This is to say that signs, or codes, by denoting meaning are not an imitation of meaning, but are instead just as real as meaning. He goes on to say that “it is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real, that is to say of an operation of deterring every real process via its operational double” (2). Therefore, each image of Kaneki created exists in this system of signs (the system of signs being the comic book, and later the internet) as a creation outside of the previously signified, and therefore is real in that his form and his text are substitutions of signs (things that are codified) without direct imitation. And yet, through the repeated tracing and repositioning of the character, as a manga artist does, the audience begins to know Ken Kaneki, not just as a teen who was turned into a ghoul through a unfortunate organ transplant, but also as a person who wears clothes, drinks coffee, lives in an apartment, and reads books, just as a human might in “real life.” These, too, are codes and signifiers that are contextualized by the real world and these contexts are projected by the reader onto the character in order for the character to function narratively.

While Kaneki gains his status as a subject and his meaning through his signifiers, the language and image that becomes associated with him as a character, there still must exist a high level of reader interaction with the form of the comic alone in order for the narrative to be driven and a convincing simulation to occur. According to comics theorist Scott McCloud, a large part of this interaction comes from creating closure between panels. McCloud argues that “deliberate, voluntary closure is comics’ primary means of simulating time and motion” (69). What this means is that all of the information given to the reader within the panels has to be supplemented by the reader between the panels in order to have narrative progression. McCloud explains that there are six types of panel-to-panel transitions, some requiring more reader interaction than others in order to achieve closure. He notes that while mainstream American comics tend to contain mostly panel-to-

panel transitions in the categories that allow for easy closure, manga tends to use a more varied set of panel-to-panel transitions, including a higher number of those that require more reader interaction (72-81).

This may seem like a drastic differentiation between reality and a distinctive non-reality, but in actuality, the constant creation of closure is also the way that a person understands the world around them. As McCloud puts it, “all of us perceive the world as a whole through the experience of our senses. Yet our senses only reveal a world that is fragmented and incomplete...our perception of ‘reality’ is an act of faith, based on these fragments” (62). The only piece of knowledge a person can truly believe in is that their mind somehow exists, whereas all other senses, the means by which the world outside of one’s own mind is experienced, must be interpreted and closure must be formed within the mind in order for the world to make sense. Sensory perceptions are easily doubted due to how fragmented the information we receive from our senses inherently is, and because of this, there is a large amount of missing information that the mind must account for in order to form reality<sup>1</sup>. And yet, a person must rely on their ability to create closure to go about their day-to-day lives. Because of the high level of reader interaction that a comic demands, the reader may actually feel closer to the characters and the setting than they might be with a film or a novel simply due to the fact that interpreting a narrative through the form of a comic functions so closely to the way that the real world is constantly understood and interpreted.

### **How We Read *Tokyo Ghoul***

The first image that the audience sees of Ken Kaneki in the standard reading of the manga is on the front cover. In this image, almost his entire front is visible, both hands, and his face. He is dressed in semi-formal wear: pants, a button up long-sleeved shirt, and an unbuttoned vest. In one hand he is holding a book. All of these details give the audience some specificity about how the character interacts with the simulated material plane in which he is posed. This idea can also be applied to his body language and facial expression. Each iteration of the character throughout the piece amplifies this effect, as the internal ideology of the diegesis interpellates the character through the simulation created and enacted by the author.

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<sup>1</sup> Moreover, this idea about living within a fragmented world is not new. In many ways, it is similar to Descartes’ ideas about the possibility of our senses deceiving us, as well as his famous notion of *cogito ergo sum*, translated as “I think therefore I am” (Skirry). This is also relevant to Alfred Korzybski’s writing on general semantics and abstraction.



If the first image of Kaneki the audience naturally sees is on the cover, then the procession of images from that point are out of order within the timeline. As previously stated, the first image of Ken Kaneki in volume one is on the cover of the book. More specifically, this image shows Kaneki already in the form of half ghoul and half human, a change that happens later in the timeline of the character. Charles Hatfield described the way in which we understand the progression of time within a comic as a tension in which we simultaneously read an image as a single image and an image within a series (41). Therefore, the difference in diegetic time—time as experienced by the characters, or “real time” in the story—that occurs between the first image of him and the technical first image within the narrative does not negate the realness of the character due to comics’ unique formal ability to exist temporally within itself. The ineffectuality of conceptual time in the character’s subjective development also reconfirms its existence within the hyperreal.

Continuing with the first impressions that an audience has of Kaneki, the first conversation spoken between Kaneki and his best friend Hide seems to be meant to give the reader an understanding of Kaneki’s character. This is done through a system of hailing in which Hide addresses Kaneki using character traits: “you’re a nerdy weakling always reading those weird books,” says Hide, and Kaneki responds by accepting and identifying with the hail, retorting with “they’re not weird” (Sui 8). Within the diegetic world of the *Tokyo Ghoul*, this helps to establish Kaneki as a subject. However, if the diegesis interacts with ideological functions in the same way as the real world, this is mimesis, which is to say that ideology is simulated within the frame of fiction, and that too is the hyperreal. This connection to the real world within the fiction is deepened through further references to the real world, the most obvious being the use of the city Tokyo.

Moreover, there are numerous references to real-world literary works in the story such as *The Setting Sun* by Osamu Dazai and *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka. This being said, the most remarkable item to speak of that is unique to comics as a form is the abstraction of the real-world human form through simulacral images which are both rooted in the real world through the very representation of life yet abide by no direct reference to an individual subject. Furthermore, the particularly realistic art style that Kaneki is drawn in allows for his particular abstraction to be unique to him, marking him as only a sign for himself. This is apparent in all instances of Kaneki. Remembering the image on the cover, the ability that a reader has to recognize body language, expression, and clothing comes out of the relationship that the image has with the real world as a simulation of the real



world. There is an assumption that his clothing is semi-formal because they are an abstraction and mimesis of what is already codified as semi-formal within our everyday life through real world ideology.

The blurred lines of diegesis and mimesis offers an expose of truth and reality. Within the story of *Tokyo Ghoul*, this discourse is expanded into ideas of human and non-human. Allegory, such as *The Metamorphosis*, becomes diegetical reality and that reality becomes hyperreal as Ken Kaneki is transmogrified into a half-ghoul- half-human in front of the eyes of the reader. For the latter half of the first volume, Kaneki struggles through what he considers a loss of his humanity. It is only through understanding that Kaneki's humanity is real that an audience is able to understand how it could be lost.

Ken Kaneki's self-problematized liminality is ameliorated on page 216 as Yoshimura tells him that instead of his previous belief that he had become a creature belonging neither in the human world nor the nonhuman world, he is actually "the only person who has a place in both worlds." In this panel that this is said, Kaneki is drawn with his body and eyes facing forward so that he is potentially making

eye contact with the reader. If, as theorist Benveniste writes, language is a system of symbols (223), and Hatfield establishes image as a symbol or code, then in this moment Kaneki is establishing the "I" in opposition to the reader, "you," also inducting the reciprocal situation. This is yet another act in which Kaneki is establishing himself a subject, this time in direct opposition to the reader. This creates a two-way door suitable for Althusser's ideological recognition function in which the subject proclaims themselves and are recognized as thus and in that recognition, the recognizer (the reader) also posits themselves as a subject (263).



It is not only through hailing that Kaneki's character is formed through the text. It is also through the simulation of self-identification that Kaneki is subjectified. This is done by the repeated use of "I" in Kaneki's speech bubbles. According to linguistic theorist Emile Beneveniste, "it is in the instance of discourse in which I designate the speaker that the speaker proclaims himself as the 'subject'" (226). Furthering this argument, Beneveniste states "there is no other objective testimony to the identity of the subject except that which he himself thus gives about himself" (226). This means that there is no way to confirm an individual's subjectivity until they announce themselves as a subject. In the speech bubbles in *Tokyo Ghoul*, Kaneki often makes statements about himself using "I". One striking example of this is on pages 141 and 142 where Kaneki proclaims "I am a human being! I'm not like you monsters!!!", or "僕は人間だ! お前ら化け物と違うんだ!" (Sui 141-142). (The character 僕, pronounced "boku," is a way of denoting oneself in Japanese.) Through the use of personal pronouns, the only information that we have that can be objectively true is Kaneki as the speaker is the subject and this in itself gives rise to his subjectivity.

### **How We Make *Tokyo Ghoul***

Reader interaction does not end with the response to the gaze, or even McCloud's ideas of fragmentation and closure between panels, but instead can lead a reader into fully taking narratives into their own hands. This is also the case for Ken Kaneki and the readership of *Tokyo Ghoul*, who, on fanfiction.net, have posted over 2,300 *Tokyo Ghoul*-derived fanfictions and a whopping 6,648 on AO3. In *Otaku: Database Animals*, Hiroki Azuma describes the way in which the subculture of "otaku," a subculture of people, usually young men, who obsess over pop culture such as anime and manga, interacts with manga on the internet through a network of databases, relating this network of databases to the idea of the hyperreal and qualifying them as one in the same (31, 59). About the production of manga, along with anime and videogames, he states:

in many cases, even original works create worlds through citation and imitation of precious works. Without reference to the real world, the original is produced as a simulacrum of preceding works from the start, and in turn the simulacrum of that simulacrum is propagated by fan activities and consumed voraciously. In other words, irrespective of their having been created by an author (in the modern sense), the products of otaku culture are born into a chain of infinite imitations and piracy. (26).

Azuma goes on to argue that because of this phenomenon, the simulacrum and the derivatives of that simulacrum can be placed on a scale, both of “realness” and consumer value, at equal positions (26). Putting all of this together, the spread of fanfiction and other derivative works, tracings and retellings of the characters and the story, over the internet furthers the subjectivity of both the characters and the readers by creating a space where they interact together.

While Azuma focuses mainly on *Otaku* culture, which is a subculture in Japan, the popularity of *Tokyo Ghoul* fanfiction in America can be used to exemplify a globalizing effect of the hyperreal. The first is a globalization of subculture through internet use and mediated interactions in the hyperreal. This is to say that by spreading media, there is also a spread and outreach of culture<sup>2</sup>. As mentioned before, Azuma likens the internet as a network of databases to the hyperreal. Mark Nunes does so as well when he argues that the internet “provides a site for exploring the world” in a hyperreal plane (314). One consequence of this, or perhaps a discovery in likeness, is that it is now apparent that there is a similar value system—or at least developing valuing—of fan created derivative works within various American subcultures as there is in the *Otaku* subculture in Japan. This point is driven home by the fact that *Tokyo Ghoul*, being originally published in Japan, is able to thrive in American-based internet databases. In other words, tracing elements of original works to create derivative works and spreading these traces online also traces and spreads elements of culture as well.

### **Conclusion**

In drawing the character of Ken Kaneki, as well as giving him a voice through text, Ishida Sui creates a simulation of a subject. This subject exists in the ideological realm of the hyperreal which, in its nature as an ideology, interpellates the individual as a subject (Althusser 261). Each successive tracing and speech writing of Kaneki reiterates his subjectivity and further interpellates him within the hyperreal, regardless of where the image falls on the timeline of the narrative, or who is responsible for the creation of the image. Nevertheless, narrative progression also plays an extremely strong role in the development of Kaneki. The textual information received in congruence with images of Ken Kaneki is also integral to his character formation.

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<sup>2</sup> This is explored in depth in *Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected World* (Ito, Okabe, and Tsuji).

Further, the way in which Kaneki responds to hails and asserts himself through personal pronouns and consequently gains subjectivity is representative of real-world ideological apparatuses being simulated within the hyperreal. Through these apparatuses that are simulated in themselves inside of the form of a comic, which is a system of signs, and which by the nature of the medium requires reader interaction in a way that closely replicates the fragmented understanding of the real world, Ken Kaneki is enabled to be a simulated subject in hyperreality—another system of signs—being real in his own right. Ken Kaneki works particularly well as a character that bridges reality and hyperreality due to both his diegetic liminality: his existence between humanness and ghoulishness, his realistic abstraction (meaning the abstraction heavily uses previously codified images of the real world to create meaning) that makes him a signifier for only himself, as well as his original resurrection being within the form of a comic. The creation of this bridge also allows for the spread and globalization of previously regionalized practices and experiences. It is through the realness of the hyperreal that the spread of fiction as fact and trace as original can exist in a new, postmodern ideological system of databases that is hyperreality.

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# ERICA HORAK

Erica Horak is a business administration major who is very passionate about writing and enjoys analyzing literature. She feels the process of studying a text and writing an analysis is an important way to gain a new perspective while also being able to express creativity.

Mentor: **Yewulsew Endalew**

## TRACES OF CHARACTER INFLUENCES IN *THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY*

**INFLUENCE CAN BE EXAMINED ON A PSYCHOLOGICAL BASIS TO EXPLAIN ONE'S ACTIONS.** Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory states that "new patterns of behavior can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behavior of others" (Bandura 3). The influence of others, seen in Dorian Gray in the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde, can be explained by the Social Learning Theory because Dorian observes, imitates, and models the ideas and actions of his friends, Lord Henry and Basil Hallward. To take the theory a step further, if one's actions are a direct result of observation and imitation of another, then those actions can be traced back to the person being imitated. Thus, this paper argues that one's character traits and actions can be traced back to the influence of others. By considering the case of Dorian Gray, this paper's aim is to show that, often, close friends can have an altering impact on one's identity, decision-making skills, and moral standards.

The novel begins with Dorian Gray as a pure young man who is admired by many for his beauty. However, the influence of his two friends, Basil Hallward and Lord Henry, lead him to sin and cause his identity to change in a way that leads to the destruction of his own life. After Basil Hallward paints a portrait of Dorian,

Basil and Lord Henry convince him that beauty and youth are the highest values in life. These ideas of vanity cause Dorian to spend his life believing he should focus on striving for beauty and preserving youthfulness while living without regard for anything else. Time passes in his life, but his physical body does not age or lose beauty because all of the aging and marks caused by sin are reflected on the portrait that he hides away in secrecy. His obsession with the ideas put into his head by those around him causes the portrait of him to increasingly age and become hideous as he sins. However, his sinful thoughts and actions seem to be direct results of ideas implemented on him by Basil and Lord Henry. It is also important to note that Basil Hallward and Lord Henry are older than Dorian, meaning Dorian is younger and more susceptible to influence especially by those older than him who he deems to be wiser. Thus, the portrait of Dorian Gray reflects the sins of Lord Henry and Basil Hallward because their influence is what turned Dorian Gray into a vain sinner. So, in the context of this novel, Dorian Gray's actions reflect what Basil and Lord Henry taught him. Since the Social Learning Theory explains Dorian's decisions, the sins reflected in the portrait are more reflective of Basil and Lord Henry's influence than Dorian's own free will.

Dorian is young and innocent at the beginning of the novel when he is painted by his friend Basil Hallward. Basil's friend Lord Henry hears how wonderful Dorian is and would like to be introduced to him much to the dismay of Basil. Basil tells Lord Henry that his "influence would be bad" because Basil is aware that Lord Henry would impact Dorian in a potentially harmful way (70). Basil is wary of how Lord Henry could be capable of corrupting the innocence of Dorian. However, Lord Henry and Dorian end up meeting each other at Basil's home by chance. When Dorian inquires as to whether Lord Henry is as bad of an influence as Basil says he is, Lord Henry responds, saying "there is no such thing as a good influence, Mr. Gray. All influence is immoral... To influence a person is to give him one's own soul. His sins, if there are such things as sins, are borrowed. He becomes an echo of someone else's music" (74). This is the first mention in the novel about Lord Henry's understanding of influence. It is ironic how he states how it is immoral to influence someone yet goes on to do exactly that. He acknowledges that, when someone observes someone else, the influenced starts to mimic the influencer. Thus, Lord Henry is fully aware of the power that influence can have on other people and insinuates that one man's sin can be a result of the guidance from someone else.

Dorian's lonely childhood has an impact on his ability to be easily influenced by others. Dorian reminisces in "the lonely locked room where he had spent so much of his boyhood [and] hung with his own hands the terrible portrait whose

changing features showed him the real degradation of his life” (171). For the first time, Dorian acknowledges his isolation from others as a child. Because he felt isolated and neglected as a child, his first real relationships were as a young adult, causing him to not know how to act around others. Dorian’s childhood isolation made him vulnerable to the influence of others as an adult. He had never been around people to know how to foster relationships, so when Basil and Lord Henry came into his life, he started acting like them and adopting their ideas. In Michael D. Jackson states that “our ability to shift and adjust our self-state in response to whom we are with, to what circumstance demands, and to what our well-being seems to require is more than adaptive” (72). Dorian, who spends much of his time with Basil and Lord Henry, acts sinfully and vainly around them and shifts his “self-state” to conform to how they think and act. He adapts to being around them but also takes what he learns with him to his other interactions because he is becoming who they are.

Dorian listens to what Lord Henry says even though he can be seen as a bad role model. After the portrait of Dorian is unveiled, Lord Henry tells Dorian, “youth is the only thing worth having... When your youth goes, your beauty will go with it” (Wilde 78). Although he hadn’t previously thought much of his youth and beauty, Dorian takes Lord Henry’s comment very seriously and repeats, “youth is the only thing worth having. When I find that I am growing old, I will kill myself” (83). The fact that Dorian repeats Lord Henry’s words shows how the statement directly impacted him. Jackson discusses how “we constantly change, like chameleons, according to our surroundings, and we possess an extraordinary ‘capacity to feel like one self while being many’” (72). Once Dorian was told how attractive he is and how he should treasure his youth, he became aware of it. He feels like he is being his true self but is actually adopting the characteristics and becoming similar to the people he spends his time listening to and observing. Being surrounded by Lord Henry’s ideas of vanity and obsession with youthfulness causes drastic changes in Dorian that are evident through his dialogue about youth and suicide. The dialogue marks the beginning of Dorian’s intentions’ switching from innocent to malicious. However, this transition is not reflective of Dorian thinking freely, but rather, the influence Lord Henry has on him. Jackson’s quote regarding changing based on surroundings is also reflective of the Social Learning Theory, which takes place in the dialogue as Dorian literally imitates Lord Henry by repeating what he had previously heard him say. Dorian’s imitation of Lord Henry is representative of the part of the Social Learning Theory that states “most of the behaviors that people display are learned, either deliberately or inadvertently, through the influence of example” (Bandura 5). By directly restating Lord Henry’s words and adopting his



virtues after he hears them, Dorian's behaviors prove to be a result of learning by example. Dorian's susceptibility to Lord Henry's influence is part of human nature and causes Dorian to change his moral standards and perceptions.

Not only do Basil and Lord Henry cause Dorian to change his morals, but they also cause Dorian's portrait to alter because it is a reflection of Dorian. After Dorian aids in driving his fiancé to suicide, he looks at the portrait and notices the expression has slightly changed in a hideous way. Initially after realizing his portrait is changing from his sins, he feels like he needs to stop sinning to maintain the beauty of the portrait. However, upon further thinking and realizing his portrait is bearing all of his sins and aging rather than his physical body, Dorian decides to embrace his urges to acquire "eternal youth, infinite passion, pleasures subtle and secret, wild joys and wilder sins—he was to have all these things. The portrait was to bear the burden if his shame: that was all" (Wilde 135). Lord Henry and Basil consistently encourage him to be vain and sin, causing Dorian to develop a feeling of invincibility and carelessness, since he was able to sin while maintaining his youth and beauty. Dorian's apathy can be directly attributed to his "friends." Because Dorian's sins are all influenced by Lord Henry and Basil Hallward, the portrait is actually bearing their thoughts that they spread to Dorian.

Antonio Sanna explains that "temptations and dangers of sin and pleasure [are] derived from satisfaction and fulfillment" (28). This directly explains the dangers of the pleasures enticing to Dorian. Dorian feels satisfaction from sin and believes that there are no negative consequences besides the marks on the portrait, which he can easily hide away in his attic. He is blinded by the fact he can do whatever he wants with no consequences to his physical youth or beauty. The vanity that led him to decide sin was acceptable as long as his youth was preserved was taught to him by Lord Henry and Basil. Dorian even told Lord Henry "I am putting it into practice, as I do everything you say" (Wilde 91). He directly admits he practices everything Lord Henry preaches, which is dangerous, especially because Lord Henry is a bad influence. In his essay on the Social Learning Theory, Bandura explains how "most of the behaviors that people display are learned, either deliberately or inadvertently, through the influence of example" (5). Thus, learning is done by observing and because Dorian talks to few people outside of Lord Henry and Basil, most of his observing is of them. Dorian's actions are not truly his own but rather an imitation of what he observes his friends saying and doing. The portrait would leave a trace "for every sin that he committed, a stain would fleck and wreck its fairness" (Wilde 122). However, the sins he committed that would leave a mark were not marks of his own. His innocence was corrupted by the people he spent his time observing so it is them who are responsible for the stains and marks of the portrait.

Lord Henry explicitly states that he is an inspiration in Dorian's eyes. After encouraging Dorian to marry a woman he does not know, Lord Henry tells Dorian, "you will always be fond of me. I represent to you all the sins you have never had the courage to commit" (109). Lord Henry completely admits to influencing Dorian with sin and intriguing him with destructive behavior. He teaches Dorian to value pleasure and that it is acceptable to sin for pleasure or to make poor decisions without needing to consider the consequences. Lord Henry's words also help to engrain in Dorian's mind that he is a role model and accuses Dorian of aspiring to be like him. Bandura explains that "virtually all learning phenomena resulting from direct experiences can occur on a vicarious basis through observation of other people's behavior" unless there is a sort of negative reinforcement (2). Lord Henry rarely reprimands Dorian for his actions. But when he disapproves, it is because Dorian was being kind or making good choices. Basil sometimes interjects to tell Dorian when he should rethink his bad decisions, but Lord Henry is usually there to immediately counteract his statements. Further, Dorian always seems to prefer brushing off what Basil is saying and is mesmerized solely by Lord Henry's talk of sin and pleasure.

Dorian becomes detached from Basil and only regards the opinions and advice of Lord Henry because Basil often tries to advise Dorian against Lord Henry's bad advice. Dorian tells Lord Henry that he "[doesn't] want to see [Basil] alone. He says things that annoy me" (Wilde 99). Thus, Dorian gets sick of hearing Basil's opinion because he knows he is right. He immerses himself in the sinful ideas of Lord Henry and attempts to block out Basil's input. Since Dorian developed the mindset that he can sin as much as he wants since only the portrait will bear the aging, he doesn't mind only listening to the harmful things Lord Henry has to say. He stops acknowledging what Basil has to say against Lord Henry because he knows he is right and doesn't want to hear it. Lord Henry also tells Basil that "Dorian is far too wise not to do foolish things now and then, my dear Basil" (104). Lord Henry tries to justify Dorian's wrongdoings which makes Dorian think it is acceptable to sin and obsess over youth and beauty. Because Lord Henry is the one influencing Dorian, he makes excuses for him to do bad things. Dorian states, "if I ever did a crime, I would come and confide it to you. You would understand me" (95). By suggesting that Lord Henry would be understanding if he committed a crime, Dorian insinuates that Lord Henry is the person he can go to for wrongdoings. He knows Basil is not understanding and would be disapproving of Dorian's sins which is why Dorian says he would rather go to Lord Henry to discuss them. The Social Learning Theory states that "on the basis of informative feedback, [people] develop thoughts or hypotheses about the types of behavior most likely to succeed.

These hypotheses then serve as guides for future actions” (3). Thus, by encouraging Dorian when he sins, Lord Henry influences Dorian to make bad choices in the present and future. He conditions Dorian how to act badly in situations by continuously rewarding him for his bad behaviors.

Although Basil does not approve of Dorian’s “sinful actions” that result from Lord Henry’s influence, he still reinforces the ideas of obsessing over youthfulness and beauty, which harmed Dorian and caused marks on the portrait. Dorian decided to sin uncontrollably because it would not damage his body but rather just mark up the portrait. This idea of preserving his beauty over anything else was influenced by Basil and Lord Henry making both of the men in the wrong. Dorian questioned “What did it matter what happened to the coloured image on the canvas? He would be safe. That was everything” (136). “Safe” in this context can be interpreted as free from aging and losing beauty. His obsession with youthfulness and beauty comes directly from both Basil and Lord Henry and is what ultimately drives Dorian. Dorian has the point of view that there are no consequences for his actions because he can be as vain and irresponsible as he wants but it would be acceptable because he wouldn’t bear it on his physical body.

Lord Henry displays sexism and tries to implement these ideas on Dorian through the suicide of Sybil Vane. When Dorian Gray refers to a woman he loves as a genius, Lord Henry responds by saying, “my dear boy, no woman is a genius; women are a decorative sex. They never have anything to say, but they say it charmingly” (Wilde 91). This misogynist comment displays Lord Henry’s degrading opinions on the value of women. He discredits that women can be smart and refers to them as a “decorative sex,” which objectifies women. When Dorian finds himself dissatisfied with his fiancé because of her lack of talent when acting, Lord Henry says, “she is beautiful. What more can you want?” (Wilde 115). Lord Henry once again only values beauty and seems to feel that women are only good for their looks. He puts the idea into Dorian’s mind that marriage and relationships don’t need to be emotional but rather based on physicality. Lord Henry speaks lowly of women to Dorian which leads him to believe it is acceptable to think and act in ways that are derogatory to women, such as driving Sybil Vane to commit suicide.

Dorian Gray’s fiancé kills herself after Dorian shames her for her poor acting skills in a performance of *Romeo and Juliet*, leading to the very first mark of sin on the portrait. Lord Henry contributed to Sybil Vane’s suicide because he influenced Dorian on how to treat Sybil. The portrait of Dorian changed to reflect the sin he committed of brutally removing Sybil from his life, which was a result of Lord Henry’s advice. Lord Henry tells Dorian not to worry too much about her suicide because “if [he] had married this girl [he] would have been wretched” (129).

Lord Henry discredits the power of a connection two people can have stating how women are only capable of draining men. He states that if Dorian would have gone through with the marriage, he would have been miserable. These ideas impact Dorian's identity because Lord Henry's influence leads to an adoption of ideas on marriage and love.

Lord Henry's influence is ironic in that he says many things with which his actions do not necessarily align. This can be explained by cognitive dissonance, which "refers to a situation involving conflicting attitudes, beliefs or behaviors" (McLeod). When discussing morals, Dorian says that Lord Henry "never say[s] a moral thing, and never [does] a wrong thing" (Wilde 61). Dorian addresses that Lord Henry says a lot of immoral things yet doesn't necessarily ever do anything bad. This idea relates back to cognitive dissonance because Lord Henry's thoughts are inconsistent with his actions. Thus, Lord Henry consistently spreads sinful ideas to Dorian but doesn't actually commit the sins firsthand. Lord Henry sins by advising Dorian to do bad things even though he is young and vulnerable. Lord Henry solely shares ideas with Dorian as a way to influence him to sin, but it goes unquestioned as to why he doesn't commit sins himself. It is almost as if he is malicious and wants to ruin Dorian and harm his reputation by influencing him to wildly sin without remorse.

Basil blames Lord Henry for Dorian's shift in identity when acknowledging that Dorian has not aged but has changed as a person. He tells Dorian, "you look exactly the same wonderful boy who used to come down to my studio, day after day, to sit for his picture. But you were simple, natural, and affectionate then. Now, I don't know what has come over you. You talk as if you had no heart, no pity in you. It is all Harry's influence" (138). He blames Lord Henry for his changing personality and accepts no responsibility for influencing him with vain morals. The dialogue only addresses how Lord Henry's influence has changed Dorian for the worse and corrupted him. Dorian, however, does not let Basil get away with blaming Lord Henry for his corruption. Dorian mentions to Basil how "You met me, devoted yourself to me, flattered me, and taught me to be vain of my good looks. One day you introduced me to a friend of yours, who explained to me the wonder of youth, and you finished a portrait of me that revealed to me the wonder of beauty" (188). Dorian addresses how both Basil and Lord Henry both worked together to influence Dorian on the importance of youth and beauty through conversation and the painting of the portrait. The Social Learning Theory can be attributed to the situation because Dorian addresses how the two men he looked up to serve as models of bad morality for him to observe and imitate.

The theme of homosexuality is brought up in relation to sin and exposing others to homosexuality as a form of corruption in the eyes of society. However, Oscar Wilde doesn't disparage homosexuality but rather uses it as a way to demonstrate that members of society in the novel have differing views on whether homosexuality is acceptable. Basil tells Dorian, "You have a wonderful influence. Let it be for good, not for evil. They say that you corrupt everyone whom you become intimate with, and that it is quite sufficient for you to enter a house, for shame of some kind to follow after you" (183). This brings to light the homosexual undertones of Dorian's and his relationship in the book. Basil insinuates to Dorian that there are rumors of him corrupting others by exposing them to homosexuality. By stating how shame follows Dorian when he enters the homes of men as a result of intimacy, Basil is accusing him of corruption. Rather than Dorian accusing Basil of corrupting him with vanity, Basil is now the one accusing Dorian of influencing other men. This is an important turning point because, rather than being the one who is influenced, Dorian can be seen as the influencer. However, throughout the book Basil can be seen as having romantic feelings for Dorian. Thus, Basil is accusing Dorian for corrupting others because Basil is actually quite jealous of the other men who Dorian has romantic relationships with. Sanna claims, "the sins committed by Dorian are conducted in a silent and secret way, far from the eyes and accusing words of the human community and its laws" (28). Dorian tried to keep his homosexuality a secret since it was unacceptable in the eyes of society. Influence is relevant in this instance because rather than being influenced by others, Dorian is accused of doing the influencing and spreading "sinful ideas."

Similarly, Dorian threatens Alan Campbell that, if he doesn't get rid of Basil's body after he murdered him, Dorian will blackmail him with rumors about their past homosexual relationship. Dorian threatens Alan, saying, "you leave me no alternative. I have a letter written already. If you don't help me, I must send it. You know what the results will be. But you are going to help me. It is impossible for you to refuse now" (202). The reader is left to believe that there was an intimate relationship between the two men and Dorian is using it as a threat to expose Alan. Weeks following Alan's success in getting rid of the body, "Alan Campbell had shot himself one night in his laboratory, but had not revealed the secret that he had been forced to know...His suicide had been his own act. It was nothing to [Dorian]" (214). This is the second person in the novel who commits suicide as a result of having an intimate relationship with Dorian. Alan Campbell's suicide can be attributed to not only the secret of Basil's death that Dorian forced him to be involved with but also the threat of exposing his homosexuality to the public eye which would ruin his reputation.

Dorian ends up being very malicious and having no regard for human life when his emotions and sinful ideology take over. When the men are middle-aged, Dorian shows Basil how the portrait he had painted had aged and become hideous. He goes on to murder Basil in a psychotic episode of frustration that resulted from living a life of shame and hiding away the portrait. He asks Alan to get rid of the dead body and adds, "Alan, it was murder. You don't know what he had made me suffer. Whatever my life is, he had more to do with the making or the marring of it than poor Harry has had" (201). This shows how much Dorian blames Basil for all his problems and dissatisfaction with life, rather than attributing it to Lord Henry. He states that Basil had a lot to do with the marring of his life not only because he's the one who painted the portrait that drove him to insanity but also because he contributed to Dorian's obsession with preserving his youth and beauty. The plot comes full circle because Basil is now paying for his own vanity and poor influence on Dorian. Basil adored Dorian and was making remarks about his youth and beauty as a way to compliment him not necessarily to have a damaging effect on the outcome of his life. However, the Social Learning Theory explains the natural psychological phenomenon that took place whether or not Basil intentionally corrupted Dorian or did it out of admiration and attraction.

Dorian is finally overcome by the hideousness of the portrait due to his sins committed as a result of his friend's influence and decides it is time to destroy it using the knife he had used to kill Basil:

He seized it, and stabbed the canvas with it ripping the thing right up from top to bottom. When [the servants] entered, they found hanging upon the wall a splendid portrait of their master as they had last seen him, in all the wonder of his exquisite youth and beauty. Lying on the floor was a dead man in an evening dress, with a knife in his heart. He was withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage. It was not until they had examined the rings that they recognized who it was. (217)

The traces of sins and aging on Dorian's portrait swap with his real body when he stabs the painting in order to destroy it. His now decrepit physical body reflects his life of sin and vanity that was created by the influence of Basil and Lord Henry. The ending of the novel when Dorian unknowingly killing himself reflects that he could not escape reality and live his life without consequences for his sins. He sold his soul to the devil in exchange for youth and beauty thinking it would make him happy. However, he could not cheat reality and ends up living a life of dissatisfaction with a knife in his heart. The events that led to his fate can be attributed to Lord Henry and Basil who influenced him to go down a path of sin.

The influence of characters on one another led them down different paths in life. A trace of influence was created between characters because they impacted each other in ways that led them to change identities and act in different ways. Thus, their decisions were not necessarily reflective of their own free will but of what they thought they should do based on what they heard and observed of one another as explained by the Social Learning Theory. Dorian's sins bore upon the portrait reflect the ideas of society as well as his friends because they contributed to who he was and the decisions he made. Dorian imitated the behaviors he observed because of psychological processes and his susceptibility to influence resulting from childhood isolation. His identity shift in his adolescent years because of Lord Henry and Basil Hallward led him to a life of secrets and shame regarding the horrifying display that his portrait became. The traces of Lord Henry and Basil within Dorian resulted from influence and led to his demise.

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# GRACE MONTAGUE

Grace Montague is a second year geography and spatial data science major from Skokie, Illinois. She also hopes to pursue a minor in political science. Grace is interested in using human geography and geographic information system (GIS) technology to underscore the necessity of combining science and the humanities in order to solve global social issues.

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## LEGENDS: USING THE HERO'S JOURNEY AS A LENS THROUGH WHICH TO TRACE VALUES IN MAPS

**LEGENDS**—whether about monsters and adventures passed down through spoken stories or those tucked into the corner of the most important, yet seemingly mundane documents used for everyday navigation—hold within them the key to the way in which humanity has moved through, evolved in, and related to the world. Because of its duality of definitions, the term “legend” intrinsically represents the convergence of the studies of the humanities and science, the qualitative and quantitative, respectively. Legends create the space not only in which one can ask, “What more is there to be learned when disciplinary boundaries are crossed?” but also offer an answer as to how one may do this.

The human experience cannot be understood by literature or the arts alone, the same way that it cannot be understood solely through any scientific process. Complete and meaningful understanding of any such topic requires the exhaustion of all types of analysis. The idea of legends allows us to trace across both time and space, across academic disciplinary studies, to explore the values in humanity's most important works. It is in these works where legends appear that one may best analyze and understand the human values they preserve from the time of their creation. Legends act as the starting point for a possible new way to understand, analyze, and to trace. As geographer Denis Wood puts it in his book, *The Power of Maps*, the “legend carries a heavy burden” (97). One must begin with the two types of legends: those of heroes, and those of maps.

The hero and the map are concepts which have long embodied the way in which humanity traces its experiences and understands its relation to its world.



However, it is the combination of these two subjects, complex in their own rights, that takes the idea further, that allows us to trace their influence in reflecting values and the human experience. Maps represent the reality we see the same way that legends and myths, no matter their origin, hold the basic truths and values held by humanity itself. When maps, the universally used and understood method of looking at place, are looked at the same way in which heroes are understood as through thousands of years of retelling, we are able to understand the human values in both of these tools. And that is what they are: maps and heroes are tools which can be used to trace the human experience. There exists a similar impulse behind the creation of the map and the hero's journey, and these two tools can be connected by their unique ability to trace humanity's experience with its own reality.

"The hero's journey" and Joseph Campbell have become synonymous since Campbell's publication of his book *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* in 1949. While the actual existence of the journey of the hero predates Campbell by thousands of years, it was Campbell who took those famous journeys of heroes like Theseus and Prometheus, or Moses and the Buddha, and recognized the existence of recurring, specific steps which transformed a man into a hero that is preserved and retold thousands of years later. Campbell's book has been one of the most influential works of analysis on the hero and myth in society. In his attempts to understand the power and influence which the iconic hero story possesses and has created, Campbell quite literally traces the hero's journey by creating his own non-geographical template which maps a journey and unveils "the standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation—initiation—return: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth" (23). The monomyth, which complements Campbell's theory of the hero's journey, is the idea that some experiences, values, and beliefs are so universal in myths that they can be simplified into a template and become applicable to all legends. No matter the context of its creation, humanity's myths are filled with similar challenges, characters, and lessons. This connection and the very possibility of the existence of the monomyth reveal significant insight into the way humans have connected to their world and each other and bring the analysis of features and attributes, usually equated to scientific study, to the literature-based concept that is the hero.

Because the monomyth depends on the occurrence of similar events predetermined in a template in order to create a certain outcome, it is important to understand and analyze the features which make up legends. The steps which lead to the hero are the events which instill in him certain values and characteristics, which were significant to society for which he was created. Therefore, it is the fol-

lowing steps in the hero's journey which can be used to trace values across time.

The hero's journey, as presented by Campbell, though sometimes modified in various reproductions, contains seven main steps or processes which the subject must go through in a set order so that he may become the hero and complete the story. Just like any legend, it is the features which Campbell chooses that determine the societal values and lessons the audience receives and the work preserves. The journey begins with what Campbell calls "The Call to Adventure," in which "destiny summons" the hero and he is pulled from his mundane life to "a zone unknown" (48). The second step of the journey is the encounter with a supernatural aid, often depicted as a wise and elderly or magical man, who introduces the hero to the journey he must face. Between the second and third steps, the hero experiences what Campbell calls "The Crossing of the First Threshold." It is here the hero enters the unfamiliar, magical world of gods and monsters. The journey continues with tests and trials in which fights our hero his first monsters and begins the transformation.

Next, the hero goes through the fourth defining feature of the monomyth, which Campbell calls "The Belly of the Whale," whereby, rather than winning, the hero is humbled, often by literally being swallowed by an adversary, only to return in a symbolic rebirth. This step also sometimes called "The Supreme Ordeal," and is the climax of the hero's time in the unknown world. This results in the fifth step, which is the final transformation, post-rebirth, where we see the hero as the one who possesses all the values and characteristics the society idealizes for the first time. In order to cross back into his mortal world, the hero faces some minor trials in a "Magic Flight," and returns. The final feature we see in the journey and monomyth is the hero becoming the master of two worlds, both mortal and immortal, and finds his "freedom to live" (167-209). It is his mastery of both realms that makes the hero such an important idea to the human experience. He carries with him the adventure and characteristics of which humanity is in awe and he connects humans to something larger than themselves, something previously unimaginable. According to Campbell, these seven steps in this exact order can be found in almost every myth across time and place in all cultural contexts.

The monomyth proposes a different and unique way of thinking about the arts and human values. The very idea that the hero's journey is a universal phenomenon proposes a different way to study literature and the humanities through the features, or steps, of its legends. This method of analysis and understanding can be translated across disciplines to understand more scientific processes and works, and perhaps unveil that they are not as universally true as we once thought they were.

So the question remains: how does the hero's journey and the existence of the monomyth enable the crossing and convergence of the humanities and science in order to attempt to trace values? How can what Campbell understands to be a very human and emotional concept like the hero and his journey be transferred and applied to more scientific fields of study? The answer to these questions require an understanding and examination of maps.

Campbell uses the diagram of the hero's journey in the same way maps are used: to trace. Maps are not fact, but rather templates for the adventure to be had on the physical space they represent. Like Campbell's idea of the monomyth, maps are a universally-used basis from which humanity begins to understand and create its own adventure. And, just like the steps that create the monomyth are crucial to the creation of the hero in his journey, so too the choices made regarding which features to highlight in the creation of maps and which to include in the legend reveal the internal values of the map's creator and the society at the time.

While any map can be examined in a meaningful way using the lens that Campbell has created, there is one idea of space which resonates with myth and its heroes above all others: "the West." From books like *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck to every high school U.S. history class, the mythical West is given a significant meaning to this society as a place to go in order to be a hero. American society clearly values the West as a place in which journeys can be taken and heroes can be made. It is a symbol not of hope or a better life, but of the idea that there is more than "this," our current place and the life we have here, and our adventure does not stop because there are more places to go, and thus, more maps to be drawn. The hero has long existed because he represents the societal and human values of his time. He is the symbol, the necessity, which carries adventure as far as it can be taken. The West has always been where people have gone to prove they can survive and thrive, to prove to the world that the monsters and trials which Campbell predicted will inevitably await can be beaten, and they will achieve heroic status and carry the hopes of humanity on.

Though all maps are subject to bias, the combination of maps of Oregon, which carry with them the idea of the West, produced specifically by the map publisher Rand McNally, is of particular importance because of the role the American West, railroads, and borders have played in the idea of heroics. Rand McNally, one of the largest map and atlas publishers in the world, began as a printing company, specifically the printing of railroad tickets and timetables, as railroads were on their way to becoming the most popular and best mode of long distance transportation at the time of their founding in 1856. Based on their origins, it's no surprise that, as the Chicago-based company began to branch out into map production, railroads

maintained a high level of significance on their maps. In fact, the first map Rand McNally ever produced was in their “December 1872 RailWay Guide.” These values, as well as many others of society as a whole at the time, are evident in the two maps I will analyze using Campbell’s idea of the hero: two Rand McNally Pocket Maps of Oregon, one published in 1906, and the other in 1941. The Pocket Map and Road Atlas series produced by Rand McNally for more than a century some of the most detailed and data-accompanied maps for mass consumption. These maps covered a lot of information for their size, meaning that important choices were made in what information should be included. The features which Rand McNally chose to include are a clear indicator of what they thought was important for its consumers to know while on their various adventures, be they salesmen, tourists, shippers, or even railroad system users and managers.

When it comes to maps, most will look at them as fact. And there is nothing wrong with this at all; maps are used as an efficient and often accurate representation of space and the reality we have created for that space. They are literally based on fact and of what people know to be where. But they are not true fact because of the choices made in their creation. It is these choices, however, which have left a traceable history of the life and values of humanity. It is valuable to explore how values evolve over time by examining features highlighted on maps from different times. The years 1906 and 1941 are interesting for particular reasons in this regard. In the interim years, the United States and the entire world saw prosperity, economic depression, and the consequences of two world wars. This was an important window of time in which the values of humanity were challenged and changed, and that is reflected in the features given prominence on maps, particularly of the West, an area meant to inspire and promise hope at the start of this window.

Due to its origins in the railroad industry, Rand McNally was biased toward greater representation of railroads on their maps. More than land features, reservations, or roads, railroad systems as a feature were brought to the forefront of this map. Thus, the purpose of the map and the values of society at the time were explicitly preserved in the maps Rand McNally produced. In the early 1900s, not only was transport by railroad the most common form of transportation for passengers, but it was also the main mode of transport for the shipment of goods across the country. They were, economically and metaphysically, a vital vehicle in the human experience and the growth of that experience. Rand McNally, consciously or not, preserved traceable values because the way they chose to represent features like railroads changed. In 1906, it is clear the importance of the railroad system. From whole pages dedicated to the abbreviations of the railroad companies that oper-

ated in Oregon at the time to the railroads being numbered directly on the map in bright, red lettering, it is clear that railroads were vital both in their symbolism at the time and in their practical use in growing Oregon. The railroads changed over time, much like the population and demographics of the state. By the 1920s, cars became popular among Americans and railroads' role in society changed. During the Great Depression in the 1930s, people migrated west in cars and railroads as means to travel for pleasure became virtually obsolete. Thus, the role of railroads in the formation of identity and values of the society diminished. This is evident in the minimal space allocated in the info book attached to the 1941 map for railroads, and the only evidence of their existence are abbreviated company names along the rail lines. This great symbol of the American adventure changed and Rand McNally, a longtime connection between the railroads and maps, changed their maps with the changing times.

The second, and perhaps most obvious, feature in Rand McNally's Pocket Maps of Oregon is the use of color. In 1906, Rand McNally highlighted each county in one of four pastel colors in order to provide the map user with the simple information of what areas of Oregon were legally part of which counties, similar to the way most world maps are colored to show larger land areas like countries. The then 34 counties of Oregon were all outlined by a thin, orange line, but for the most part the user is left with the idea that the area assigned to each county was of greater importance than the borders between them. However, by 1941 in the new edition of the Oregon Pocket map, produced by the same company, the entire state land area was now instead represented by the same pale yellow cover, and instead of a thin border, the most striking feature was a thick orange border line between the now 36 counties of Oregon. Why, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was area determined to be the most important feature, but 35 years later the color differences were erased and the border was brought to the forefront?

The answer is simple: the world experienced a new reality and their values inevitably changed with them. This dramatic physical change on the map not only represents the change in values and allows for their trace, but it proves that maps are not fact because they are not static and can be interpreted differently. Even looking at other companies' maps of Oregon in the same years, there are many critical differences, not in trivial facts like the shape of the state or the number of counties, but in the choices made. In 1906, before World War I, Rand McNally and the Oregonian travelers they produced their maps for saw area as a defining factor of how they participated in space. Just the simple choice of color showed the unity within counties and the differences across them. By 1941, however, as the second World War was coming to an end, borders were much more important to the soci-

ety coming out of major world conflict and thus to the map makers as well. Travel was dictated much differently and caused Oregon to be seen as, and essentially become, one whole entity comprised of countries that were separate, rather than separate counties which together resulted in a state. In this sense, values can be traced using the impulses to represent the values of humanity. While the colors are far from literal, their presence, or more importantly the changes in their presence, were caused by very literal changes in the human experiences of the time. This apparently mere change in color, which is a significant and noticeable feature on any map, is evidence that the features decided as essential to the creation of the subject, be it a map or hero, are not fact, but based upon the values of a given creator and will be influenced by the bias inherent in any and all interpretation.

In his explanation of the steps which make up the hero's journey cycle, Campbell says, "the outlines of myths and tales are subject to damage and obscuration" (212). Every time a piece of work is recreated, or even simply read, it will change. The difference in only two features—railroad representation and color choice—on these maps, produced less than four decades apart, show that when complex, human-value-infused creations are interpreted and adapted over time, the features change and with them the meaning those subjects represent changes. This is the beauty of legends: that the subject can be the map or the hero because, either way, the legend will hold humanity's values.

In using Campbell's hero's journey as a lens through which to view maps, the values of their creators and their users are made evident. The same way that heroes possess characteristics that society valued and wanted in themselves, maps prominently display features which reflect the same values. But the choices made in their published and accepted forms unveil what the map-makers wanted the users to see, that is, what they valued and what the society that used the maps to move through the actual space valued. Much like the hero, humanity enshrines and encapsulates its values into the map in order to carry them on in history. By this logic, the human experience, indicated by human values, can be traced through the map in the same manner Campbell traces them in heroes: through the structure of their creation. While all of the choices made by Campbell and Rand McNally in the process of creating their works result in an unavoidable bias that makes up legends, that is not to say that this bias subtracts from the important role which both kinds of legends play in recording the human experience. Instead, the choice and motivations behind the creation of works like maps or hero stories are what makes them so significant and what gives them a greater and deeper meaning.

By examining and using maps the way Campbell and society have understood and used the hero, as stories influenced and altered in their creation by the

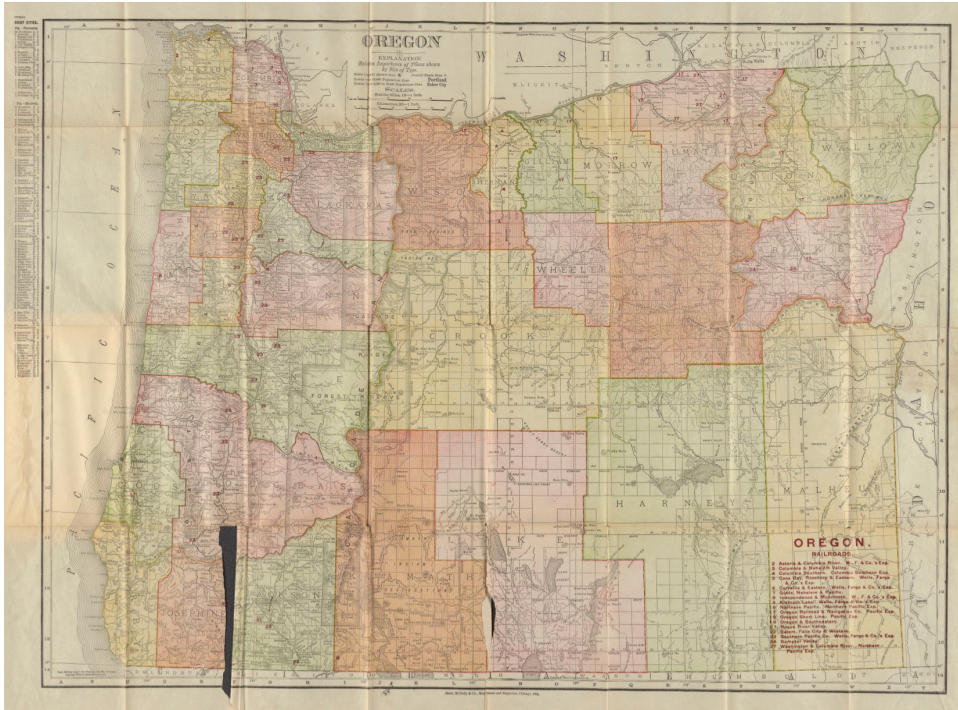
society that needed and used them, the methods which have always been used to analyze literature and the humanities can enable the ability to trace a deeper, more significant understanding of values across not only time, but physical space too.

The human experience is best traced through maps and heroes because it is these two ideas which have best embodied humanity's values, static or not. In his epilogue, Campbell addresses the image of the human and how he thinks of himself: "We are virtuous or sinful. Yet such designations do not tell what it is to be man, they denote only the accidents of geography, birthdate, and income. What is the core of us? What is the basic character of our being?" (332). Campbell is relentless in this his pursuit to understand the cycle of man, of going and returning, of unconscious to consciousness, from birth to death, and back again. He sees the hero as a way to make that cycle meaningful and uses the steps of the hero's journey to create that meaning. Campbell goes on to explain that "The essence of one's self and the essence of the world: these two are one" (333) because the hero creates the world and the world creates the hero. They are one and cannot exist without the other. So in tracing the world, as we do with maps, we must also trace the hero.

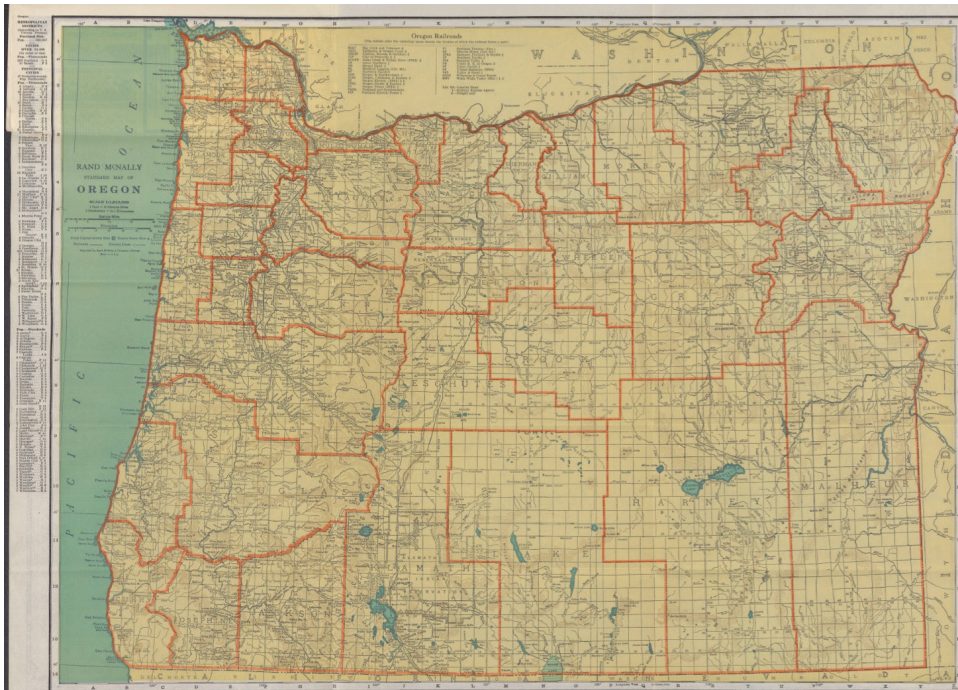
In a section of his book, which is to maps what *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* is to mythology, coincidentally entitled, "Myths," Wood explains that while a legend may seemingly show only "a selection of map elements and their disposition within the legend box that encouraged the transformation of the legend into a sign," it actually conveys the whole place or area the map claims in its title (101). The map isn't its geographical features, the same way the hero is not the steps in his journey; rather, it is those features and those steps which are the values that the map and the hero represent.

The connection between the map and hero is not immediately obvious. But it is one that has the ability to combine disciplines that have far too long ignored the other, causing academia and humanity to have suffered as a result. Not only can concepts of the humanities be analyzed alongside scientific concepts, but they are in fact better analyzed together, resulting in more significant changes in ideas about humanity and the way humans relate to their space. Maps and the hero's journey are important embodiments of the human experience. They create legends, and legends are about the choices made, the truths these choices unveil, and the values those truths trace across both time and space.

GRACE MONTAGUE



Rand, McNally & Co.'s Indexed County and Township Pocket Map and Shippers' Guide of Oregon, 1906.



Rand McNally Pocket Maps of Oregon, 1941.



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# MADELEINE ROWELL

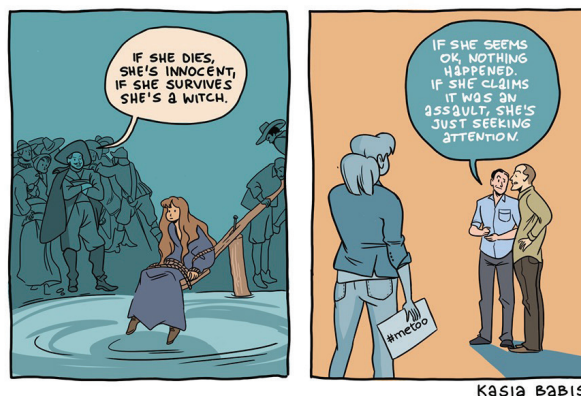
## TRACING THE WITCH FROM WORD TO DISCOURSE: EXAMINING THE DISCURSIVE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORD “WITCH”

Madeleine Rowell is a sophomore studying English and Comparative Literature. She enjoys reading classic literature for school and in her free time. Her favorite authors include William Faulkner, Zora Neale Hurston, Charlotte Brontë, and Barbara Kingsolver. Madeleine hopes to pursue a career in academia and is planning on going to graduate school to earn her Ph.D. in English after she graduates from the University of Oregon.

Mentor:  
**Prof. Leah Middlebrook**

When you hear the word “witch,” what image comes to mind? Through a simple google search, the first image to appear under the word “witch” is an image of the Wicked Witch of the West from *The Wizard of Oz*. Green-faced, with a pointed black hat, warts, and complete with a cackle and a broomstick, this image is just one of many associations conjured by the term “witch.” In any case, we all have our own signified notion of witchiness. But where do these images and associations come from? The term “witch,” in its denotative sense, refers to “one who is credited with (usually) malignant supernatural powers” (*Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary*). That definition, however, does not account for the wide array of connotations that are commonly and uncommonly associated with the term. So where do they come from? How did we get here?

Here’s how I got here. I came upon this comic while scrolling through Facebook one day, very innocently.



And it struck me. How could these two events so distant in time hold such similar meaning? What did these scenes have in common? Why can't these women seem to win? After extensive exploration, I finally found my answer in the writings of Michel Foucault, whose discussion of discourse is what I eventually have accepted as the basis for why this little comic hit me so hard. I have found that this little comic to be emblematic of Foucault's assertions about dominant power in relation to discourse. In this case, the overarching power is that of the patriarchy. In both scenes, the woman is subject to the discourse of bystanding male figures, whose words, in both cases, determine the outcome of her situation. This visual serves as an emblem of the discourse of the witch. The depiction of these scenes of women's treatment in a judicial scene call attention to how structures of power decide who a witch is. However vast the connotations of the word witch may be, this comic makes clear the way that power shapes discursive meaning.

According to Foucault, the term "discourse" refers not only to the act of discussion and its physical or verbal manifestation or formation, but also the notion that this discussion and its connotations are shaped by dominant structures of power within a given society. Foucault's definition of discourse involves knowledge and connotations that are shaped by the societal structures with which they are contingent. It is a way of systematically organizing knowledge that structures a collective social understanding of meaning which is reliant on the acceptance of discourse as social truth. In the Foucauldian sense, discursive logic is shaped by the greater epistemes of a historical period. Within this historical period, it is from power within social order that defines the rules and criteria for legitimizing knowledge and truth within the discussion. Therefore, we can understand that, in Foucauldian terms, it is not necessarily directly from the dictionary, but from the influence of dominant structures of power that we derive our common associations and uses of words.

The subject position of a person who is understood or understands himself or herself as a witch has changed immensely over time. It is for this reason that a word like "witch" can be re-appropriated from an oppressive, paranoid, fearful term to an empowering feminist symbol within a matter of centuries as structures of power begin to shift. In this essay, I trace the term "witch" as an example of what Michel Foucault would call "discourse." In fact, I am tracing the discourse of the word "witch" through its use in several textual products of different periods in time, each revealing truths about the era's dominant power in play.

Although the word "witch" has its etymological roots in Old English, coming

from *wicce*, which refers to a female magician or sorceress, depictions of women who practice magic have appeared in literature since the beginning of recorded history. This recurrence of the witch in stories and culture, however, is the only thing that has remained constant about the discourse in its entirety. Over time, the implications behind the term “witch” have metamorphosed from era to era, and in some cases, would have been unrecognizable to preceding generations.

The Salem Witch Trials, which occurred between 1692 and 1693 in Salem, Massachusetts, marked a climactic and adverse moment in historical discourse surrounding witches, rendering the term fearsome, ostracizing, oppressive, and deadly. To be called a witch in this period was to be sentenced to torture, ostracization, and often, death. The weight of the term “witch” in this moment of discourse was so great that it was enough to discount a want of solid proof of the practice of witchcraft, and a pointed finger was enough to send a neighbor to the gallows. A great example of literature exploring the feeling of the subject position of the accused female during the trials is in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Lois the Witch*, which tells the tale of a young, innocent girl accused of witchcraft by her aunt and cousins. It was written in 1861 and rhetorically exemplifies one common outcome of existing as a young woman during the trials. The following excerpt from *Lois the Witch* depicts the consequence of existing on the wrong side of a witchcraft accusation, and reveals the gravity of the predicament. Gaskell writes:

So Grace yielded to the notion herself, and encouraged it in others, that Lois Barclay had bewitched both Manasseh and Prudence. And the consequence of this belief was, that Lois was to be tried, with little chance in her favor, to see whether she was a witch or no; and if a witch, whether she would confess, implicate others, repent, and live a life of bitter shame, avoided by all men, and cruelly treated by most; or die impenitent, hardened, denying her crime upon the gallows. (80)

This excerpt from *Lois the Witch* illustrates the injustice experienced by many during the Salem Witch Trials as well as the futility of mitigating the unjustified situation these accused “witches” were faced with. Upon further close reading, this section reveals that any person accused of witchcraft, despite compliance, would most likely be killed regardless of their conduct under trial or their actions pre-condemnation. It also highlights, again, the arbitrary nature of these accusations as well as the hypocrisy of those who accuse—as lying, according to the bible, is a sin. It is not difficult to imagine Lois’ great horror in her condemnation, particu-

larly after hearing this gruesome account of a woman accused, coerced, lied to, and then killed, all without concrete reason or proof, revealing that in this time when walking while female was enough evidence to be burned at the stake, that no matter their pleas, evidence, compliance, or sincerity, a woman accused was a hopeless case.

Checking-in on the term “witch” in this tumultuous moment perhaps exemplifies the word at its ugliest, casting shadows of doubt, betrayal, scorn, and panic among loved ones and friends. The dominant power dictating the discursive connotations of the word in this particular moment was the voice of the patriarchy, and, more specifically, the Protestant Church run by Puritan authority, a particularly mighty and long-lasting authority. Scholars have attempted to understand the reasoning for this horrific event marked and driven by our word in question, and have come up with a series of possible economic and physiological theories.<sup>1</sup> However pertinent to the actual happenings of the trials these findings may be, what’s more pertinent to our interests here is the ferocity with which the term “witch” was scorched by the trials, marking it as unsavory, oppressive, and dangerous.

Fast forward about 300 years. Welcome to the 1960s, a decade of counter-culture, social revolution, and the birth of the hippie movement. During the second half of the decade, young people began to reject conservative norms that had been pervasive in society, thus spurring a movement toward societal liberation. Sexual freedom, as well as a demand for improved rights of women and minorities became essential to the period. By the end of the decade, the movement known as second-wave feminism was in full swing. Second-wave feminism expanded on first-wave feminism, which took place in the 19th and 20th centuries, and focused on suffrage and legal issues of feminism, and predominantly women’s right to vote. Second-wave feminism built on the success of women’s suffrage, and sexual, professional, and familial freedoms were common topics of protest. This movement marked a change in women’s agency, particularly regarding the wide oppression by the patriarchy. One fascinating way that this change in discourse manifested itself was, you guessed it, with the social and discursal implications of the word “witch,” especially when juxtaposed with its earlier and lingering implications created by the Salem Witch Trials.

This change presented itself in many facets, social and political, one of the most potent being the Goddess Movement, which turned the notion of women’s

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the findings of these scholars, look to scholarly articles pertaining to the cause of the Salem Witch Trials, for example, *What Caused the Salem Witch Trials* by Viki Saxon.

spirituality on its head. The Goddess Movement emerged in the early 1970s as a reaction to male-dominated organized religion in combination with the newfound female agency that second-wave feminism brought. It was a movement that celebrated spiritual femininity and the power of womanhood. Intricacies of the discourse surrounding this spiritual feminist movement are apparent in the literature it produced, perhaps one of the most predominant being the essay entitled “What the Goddess Means to Women,” by Carol Christ. Christ was a feminist theologian, author, historian, and the foremother of the Goddess Movement, and wrote much of the literature which shaped the movement of women’s spirituality. In “What The Goddess Means to Women”, Christ argues that male-dominated organized religion keeps women “in a state of psychological dependence on men and male authority, while at the same time legitimizing the *political* and *social* authority of fathers and sons in the institutions of society” (3). She elaborates on this by citing anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who argues that “religious symbols shape a cultural ethos, defining the deepest values of a society and the persons in it” as “symbols have both psychological and political effects, because they create the inner conditions that lead people to feel comfortable with or to accept social and political arrangements that correspond to the symbol system” (qtd. in Christ 2). Here, Christ makes a very Foucauldian claim, insinuating that the societally-defining discourse, or rather symbolism in this case, is dependant upon the dominant power in play, which, here, is patriarchally-based religion. It is based on this notion of symbols that Christ derives her explanation for the importance of the Goddess as a symbol for feminism. She states that the Goddess creates a new, female-oriented religious symbol, which not only paves the way for gender equality in religious representation, but social and political representation in power as well. She states that the Goddess symbolizes a “divine female” first and foremost, but also importantly, the “affirmation of the legitimacy and beauty of female power” (Christ 6). Christ solidifies the connection between this newfound affirmation of female power and the movement of second-wave feminism by noting that this new symbolization was “made possible by the new becoming of women in the women’s liberation movement,” making it clear that this new freedom in women’s spirituality was a byproduct of the movement. This new regard for the goddess marked a significant change in the discourse surrounding women’s spirituality, which brings us to an equally significant change in the cultural understanding of the word “witch.”

In another essay from 1979 entitled “Feminist Witchcraft: Controlling Our Own Inner Space,” written by Naomi Goldenberg, the notion of witchcraft is turned

on its head to make way for a completely new cultural definition for the word. The essay defines witchcraft as a use of “religion and ritual as psychological tools to build individual strengths,” and are turning “religion into psychology” (1). In other words, Goldenberg is outlining a new notion of witchcraft, which, in this new feminist movement, refers to a woman who derives power from within herself. Goldenberg notes the Old English word *wicca* to have many different definitions, one of note being “a wise woman,” although the exact definition is often quibbled over (3). She writes that, although this definition has not been pervasively connotated with the word “witch” in all moments of history, she notes that, given the newfound power in the word, “we can consider the Old English term as having been reborn, so that it actually does mean ‘wise woman’ in current usage” (4).

Another group which harnessed the term “witch” in a very literal sense for political and feminist gains was the W.I.T.C.H group, founded in 1968. The acronym W.I.T.C.H stands for the Women’s International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell, and this group, hence their name, revived and regaled the witch as a political symbol for the liberation of women. The group was started by thirteen women on Halloween, and were known for their confrontational and outrageous acts. In an essay from the book *Witched, Sluts, Feminists*, entitled “Political Witch: Rebellion & Revolution,” author Kristen Sollée provides crucial detail about this group’s various acts and influence on the feminist movement. Sollée describes the W.I.T.C.H group as having taken “guerrilla theater to the next level, drawing on fears of the wicked woman by fashioning themselves in her image” (53). She notes that these women attacked capitalism and corporations, as they were large proponents of sexism in that time dressed in black robes and pointy hats, donning broomsticks and all. They were known to have “hexed” the New York Stock Exchange, and they even had their own “Macbethian” protest chant, which Sollée recounts in her essay:

Double, bubble, war and rubble,  
When you mess with women, you’ll be in trouble.  
We’re convicted of murder if abortion is planned  
Convicted of shame if we don’t have a man  
Convicted of conspiracy if we fight for our rights.  
And burned at the stake if we stand up to fight. (53)

Here we have text that lies at the core of the reappropriation of the witch during the 60s and 70s, as it recaptures a famous witchy chant written in one of many tumultuous eras for witchcraft, when the word was synonymous with devil worship, treason, and dark magic, and recasts it as the scaffolding for a chant which

calls into question some of the many ways women were (and still are) oppressed by the patriarchy, using their feminist powers to conjure a linguistic transfiguration.<sup>2</sup>

Sollée's essay also includes another quote from the W.I.T.C.H group, which summon a similar feminist message, yet also embodies the heart and soul of what the reformed word "witch" meant: "If you are a woman, and dare to look within yourself, you are a Witch." This assertion or witchiness echoes the words of the women writing during the Goddess movement, the words that redefine witchiness, not as devil worship, or black magic, but as self-realized feminine power.

This change in discourse made is visible in many areas of culture from this era, music being one of the most notable. Images and lyrics of the witch became very common in the music scene of the 60s and 70s, perhaps most notably with the emergence of pop icon and self-proclaimed witchy woman, Stevie Nicks. Known as one of the lead singers for the band Fleetwood Mac, Nicks' music became increasingly popular after the band's formation in 1967. Her wardrobe, which was comprised of mostly black lace and organza, capes, feathers, and hats, was just the tip of the witchy iceberg. In another essay from *Witches, Sluts, Feminists* entitled "Music Witch: Sound as Sorcery," author Sollée discusses the witchy legacy of Stevie Nicks in the music world. Sollée writes that in *Interview*, Nicks revealed that "A long, long, time ago I decided I was going to have a kind of mystical presence, so I made my clothes, my boots, my hair, and my whole being go with that. But it wasn't something I just made up at that point. It's the way I've always been. I've always believed in good witches—not bad witches..." (Sollée 126). Nicks' own story of her witchy self-discovery aligns well with the reappropriated discourse of the period, reclaiming 'witch' as a term which conjured women's self-empowerment, more specifically, the discovery and harnessing of a power that lies within. Considering this, it's no surprise that some of these notions appeared in her music. One of the most widely known witch-anthem is Fleetwood Mac's 1975 song "Rhiannon," which serves as an elegy to a Welsh Witch. However, upon close reading, it is apparent that this song, among others written by Nicks, embody the newfound meaning of witchiness as female power and autonomy. The first verse of Rhiannon goes:

Rhiannon rings like a bell through the night  
And wouldn't you love to love her?  
Takes to the sky like a bird in flight  
And who will be her lover?

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on the findings of these scholars, look to scholarly articles pertaining to the cause of the Salem Witch Trials, for example, What Caused the Salem Witch Trials by Viki Saxon.



## *Tracing the Witch from Word to Discourse*

Right away, Nicks gives us an image of a lone woman, who “rings,” signifying her ability to take up space and make herself heard, even in complete darkness. The image of the woman being a “bird in flight” conjures similar notions, her ability to fly furthering the significance of her autonomy. The repetition of questions surrounding her status as a lover reveal that she is alone, not loved by anyone in particular, a status which was once extremely threatening to the patriarchal society, yet here, juxtaposed with other symbols of literal and figurative power, it strengthens the autonomy of the female subject.

This message is also clear in one of Fleetwood Mac’s other songs, “Sisters of the Moon,” which tells the story of another powerful female, clothed suspiciously in black and holding power not only herself, but over the masses. The lyrics go:

Intense silence as she walked in the room,  
Her black robes trailing, sister of the moon.  
And a black widow spider makes more sound than she,  
And black moons in those eyes of hers made more sense to me.  
Heavy persuasion, it was hard to breathe,  
She was dark at the top of the stairs and she called to me.  
And so I followed, as friends often do,  
I cared not for love, nor money, I think she knew.  
Well, the people they still love her, and still they are the most cruel,  
She asked me, be my sister, sister, sister of the moon.

Here, like in Rhiannon, we have another account of a witchy woman commanding the room with her presence. The beginning line, “Intense silence, as she walked in the room,” just screams power over discourse, and the later the inclusion of the line “a black widow spider, makes more sound than she,” reveals that she holds this power without making a sound herself. She encapsulates the room with the simple power of her presence, not to mention the word “widow” here, too, implying all sorts of rejection of patriarchal expectations. Widows as a concept have often been feared for their unique power. For example, in early modern England, widowhood was the only status in which a woman could hold any real power over property, money, and so forth. Later in the song, along with its title, the line “and she called to me, and so I followed, as friends often do” suggests her use of the power to call to other women and have them join her as a “sister of the moon,” making this song practically the anthem for the new notion of witchhood: a feminist sisterhood, not bound in blood, but in solidarity against the powers that be, in power newly derived from within themselves and ready to be harnessed and released.

Nicks' words in "Rhiannon" mark Foucault's assertions in a slightly peculiar way. The song illuminates the discursive structures of patriarchal power not by exemplifying them as in *Lois the Witch*, but rejecting them through reappropriation. Nicks' description of a witchy woman is not condemning, ostracizing, or disempowering as the patriarchal discourse of the witch has historically defined it to be, but exactly the contrary. She describes her as powerful, independent, autonomous, an agent of her own desires, revealing a conscious rejection of the patriarchally-informed discourse of the witch and reappropriating it as a feminist symbol of power.

This trend of witchiness casting its spell through music has followed us to present day, with artists like Lorde, Lana Del Rey, Florence and the Machine, and Beyonce all alluding to various forms of witchcraft in their songs, and continuing the reappropriation of this fierce term. A resurgence of witchiness in other media is apparent, too, with the 2013 season of *American Horror Story: Coven*, and the 2018 reboot of *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, fierce, fantastic, and feminist, witches are everywhere. However, it is important to note that this feminist reappropriation of the word "witch" is not universal, and is not fixed. Like all other words, its meaning is contingent upon the epistemes and societal changes that it encounters.

It is also important to acknowledge the discussion of the recent resurgence of witchiness in media as attributed to white women appropriating notions and practices of witchcraft that have been used for far longer by historically underrepresented people, and how the rise in popularity of the witch has only gained traction because of the white woman. The nuances in this discussion reveal the presence of another structure of power at play within this discourse: the racist power of our global society. This is an extremely important topic to consider when confronting discursive texts in any capacity, and this discussion of witchiness is no exception. While the scope of this paper is too small to delve into this broad topic with any hope of resurfacing with a sense of robust understanding of its spectrum, I encourage further research on the cultural nuances of witchcraft and the possible presence of its cultural and racial appropriation as it becomes increasingly relevant in popular culture.

So, after all of this talk of discourse and power, what's the big whoop about witches? Well, the term "witch" emblemizes one way in which words have inexpressible power. The power to destroy, accuse, and kill. The power to coerce, and deceive. The power to inspire, rally, and empower. The power to reveal the oppressive institutions surrounding our very notions of discursive meaning. But most importantly, they have the capacity to change.

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